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A NOTE ON THE IMAGERY AND VERSE FORMS OF TAGORE

AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY

A) *Imagery*

AN image, like the rest of a poetic composition, draws from the artist's integral philosophy rather than from what is popularly called his poetic imagination. That is to say, the poet's whole way of life is involved in the pattern of his images. In Rabindranath Tagore's poetry the changes in the image-pattern can be traced to two distinct mutations of his life and thought. A subsidiary point has been noted later.

Unlike the traditionally revered Indian seers Tagore was reclusive in his boyhood and youth, while he came nearer to people and society in his advanced age. In his early poetry the cosmic elements predominated owing to a close and unbroken kinship with nature. The mysterious garden and sky outside his childhood confinement in the family mansion in Calcutta provided images of companionship, elusive beckonings, and a mythical witness to an abiding reality. In his boyhood meditations nature came first, interspersed with humanity but never dominated by human events and passions; the high Himalayas where his father took him became the symbol of both remoteness and grandeur touched by ancient legends such as those of Śiva and Pārvatī. The dance of Śiva, the story of his snowy locks melting as the stream of the Ganges appear in Tagore's songs and dramas and are aesthetically rendered in some of his greatest odes and mountain poems. Riverine Bengal filled his *Sāadhanā* days with the much apostrophized river Padmā, which was not only his daily background when he lived in his houseboat but became his "life's companion", his "Muse" and "beloved". The dream figure leading the golden bark along perilous bends was sometimes a composite of the Padmā and the Eternal Feminine also presenting, as the case might be, the blue distances and the divine call. At night the stars, not only the *sandhyā-tārā* (the pole-star) of his poems but also the "Seven Hermits of the Sky" (the Great Bear) looked down upon him across time's distance. They guided and comforted him and shared their

and returned to his own. Inter-personal situations arose in his songs and poems as parts of a cosmological existence. Not that human emotions were anything but warm and meaningful, but their significance depended on man's power to relate himself with the ultimate images of his being. The Kṛṣṇa legend provided him with such images both pastoral and sublime; the flute of Kṛṣṇa called him from the Great Beyond and keen was his separation from the home away from home. Tagore had strong Vedic and especially the Vedic affiliations; the celestial gods and goddesses which of course had no religious meaning to his monotheistic faith, supplied him with divine images. He drew continually from this unspent source of early inspiration, peopling his songs and poems and dramatic sketches with primal emotions which took the form of radiant Vedic emblem. Supreme among such images was *Urvāṣī*, the spirit of eternal beauty, lighting the human heart with her super-personal attraction. Vedic or other forms of primordial myth were by no means a poetic stereotype; considerable variations in the use of images can be found in every period of his poetic growth. But the earlier visionary patterns became less true to him as he lived and worked in closer relationship with the societal and human context.

A curious transposed form of imagery increasingly found its way into his stories and poems; a homeless wandering boy in a riverside market could become the image of love and detachment. A sick child looking outside the window at the passers-by, and waiting for a letter from the King was the lonely innocent soul waiting for God. The girl who brings her flowers of remembrance to his death-bed is love lifted up to an eternal human level. Bullock carts creaking along the dark lane with swinging lanterns became the wakeful spirit in rural loneliness. Boatmen and boats, the river and the shore, the crossing and the waters, changed their imaging associations and filled his poetry with variations of the theme. Yeats deeply responded to this symbolic imagery of Tagore's poems which drew from the recesses of a whole people's consciousness and were yet peculiarly modern and Tagorean.

Increasingly Tagore's images became humanized. The cosmic element was retained but was somehow poetically domesticated. Even at the risk of over-simplification one can attribute Tagore's changing imagery to his deviation from an early unquestioning attribution of divinity and divine purpose to natural and human events,

He moved toward his own definition of personalism. This shift in his outlook away from an easy theocentrism made him drop images which established a ready symbolic arrangement between man and God and between nature and human events. His later philosophy culminated in *The Religion of Man* and particularly in the lectures on *Man* delivered at Andhra University. In these writings (he interpreted the change that had come over him making him accept human social purpose and man's "self-creating" power as the most essential thing in humanity.) Though he was profoundly theistic to the end, he could not any more attribute divine functions to stone and star, but would rather see the heavenly phenomenon in the light of man. As he said himself he could not any more write a song like "*Kare āratī chandra tapana*" ("the moon and the star move their lights in a ritual of worship") for he was not sure what the stars actually did or did not, apart from the needs of poetic requirement. Basically, for later Tagore the star was a starry fact and he even pursued it with an actual scientific vision. It is important to recognize the radical change in his scientific attitude when he entered deeply into modern astronomy, botany and medicine. He had of course always avoided a dichotomy between science and religion, but now, in his later life, cosmic reality did not have to be probed with myths but with a telescope. Microbiology suited him better than the theory of mystical correspondences unsupported by scientific investigation. In one of his later songs the earthen lamp shining in a village home is more real to our humanity than the heavenly star. Not only did he write a book on astronomy "*Visva-parīchaya*" ("An Introduction to the Universe") but also in his great poetry—particularly in *Balākā* ("The Flight of Swans"), *Puravī* ("The Even-Song") and in later volumes of verse like *Parishesh* ("Toward the End")—the glittering firmament, the dark heaving ocean with lost and rising continents and the geological earth shared in the majesty of their own reality and mystery rather than lend themselves to mythological usage. The earthly rituals of man's daily life did not have to be imaged or depend on extra-territorial imagery, but became wondrous in their own simple and unfathomable poetry of human reality. His imageries became increasingly earth-bound and simple though often one can trace the returning tide of early cosmic imagery. A perfect example of his latest images is to be found in one of his later poems where "*Dhulir tilak*" ("consecration with dust") combines in itself

the last touch of mother dust, the auspicious Hindu mark placed on the forehead of the journeying relative and Tagore's own feeling of the meaning end of his life. Life itself had become an image with the poet's faith sustaining it.

(iv) *Form*

As to "form" in Tagore's poetry, two points can be made here. Tagore used with rich success practically all the lyrical moulds known to *Vaisnava* poetry and adapted elegiac, ode and blank verse models drawn from his Bengali predecessors and contemporaries. The Sanskrit poets, especially Kālidāsa, influenced him so deeply that in paying tribute to the classical poet's *Meghadūtam*, Tagore's own poem (named *Meghadut*) carried the ancient resonance and form-effects of the old master. Tagore used the traditional grandeur of Sanskritised *sādhulabhya* Bengali and blended it with the exquisite inlaid resources of modern Bengali speech; the felicities of his verse-forms were seemingly inexhaustible. Versatility and masterly craftsmanship have placed Tagore in a supreme and unreachable place in Bengali poetry, and indeed, in the world of poetry. It would be no exaggeration to say that the ballads and odes of Keats, the lyrics of Blake and Shelley and Burns, the dramatic and descriptive poetic forms of Browning and Wordsworth, and, in our day, of Frost, find their compeers in Tagore's repertoire in verse. And this list, even in terms of English poetry alone, does not account for many of his poignant, intellectual creations. But he never seriously tried the sonnet. While Tagore imbibed on a great variety of European, Chinese, Indian and Japanese poetic forms, he never felt challenged by the sonnet structure though he knew it well in the English and Italian context. Also, Tagore's initiation into *vers libre* came late.

Chattali and *Naivedya* are the two volumes which contain the largest number of Tagore's semi-sonnets which are really fourteen-line poems with fourteen words to a line. Many of the poems are homely in tone and content, some ring with prophecy while others retain quiet spiritual depth, and a few of these fourteen line sequences, called *Chaturdashpadi-s* (fourteen-liners), are laden with poetical transcriptions and wistful anecdotes. But there is little innovation in form, the almost invariable rhyme-pattern is *aa, bb, cc*, serial order right up to the seventh couplet. It is surprising that in

Parishesh which contains a spate of technical innovations, the seeming sonnets are cast in the old pattern. It seems that the only exception is the sonnet in *Puravī* "*Je tārā mahendra kṣaṇe pratyus belāy*" ("The star which at dawn, in auspicious time . . .") which came as an answer to a persistent query¹ and which is surely a conscientious work of art. It has the rhyme-scheme *ab, ab, ac, dc, dc, dc, ff*, and is tersely textured.

Tagore never seriously examined the difference between the Whitmanesque *free verse*, meandering, resonant, and powerful in its spread—not always so—and the French *vers libre* brought into English in its bare carven reality by the imagists under Hulme and Ezra Pound. *Punashcha* and *Shesh Saptak* among others, are collections of Tagore's later poetry, mostly written in *free verse*. The poetry is more of an overflow than a gathering of recognizable units of poems; while they must have enriched the subsoil of Bengali literature, individually the poems are not memorable or artistically valid. The *free verse* form is in many ways a denial of form, and Tagore like several early twentieth century poets suffered from an excess that did not add, though flashes of genius break out in lovely lines and in whole passages of poetry.

It is to be recorded that an inner technical unrest in Tagore's mind converged with his rather sudden final illness to produce the nearest equivalent to the modern *vers libre*. Physically unable to write or to dictate a long poem, he composed in his mind short stretches of verse and held them—as he said—like a bar of music till the dawn. In the early stages of his illness he would write them down in large, faltering letters, later he dictated them to friends who attended him. A poem like *Pratham diner surya* (*The First Day's Sun*) he perhaps could not have written before. In the eleven short lines of this poem he was able to construct a basic form, organize a great idea and hold a vision, and he had space enough for two powerful images. The words move in a delicate, non-rhymed assonance.

Some have argued, following a casual remark made by Tagore, that he had already in his teen-age written "*vers libre* poems, though rhymed," in *Sandhyā Saṅgīt*. But this would be the same as referring to Matthew Arnold's *The Stray Reveller* as the prototype of Pound's *Be With Me* or H. D.'s *The Pines*. The *vers libre* technique was not suited to Tagore's genius, and even in his last poems he invests

the poem form with an almost traditional, rhythmic grace. The cold, clear beauty of grey rocks and white foam in the Ionian sea, the utter and objective transference of a memoried dance or a musical echo, did not belong to his world except as part of an ampler vision. But it is amazing that the creator of great polyphonic music, of architectured rhythm and exquisitely elaborate rhyme which are intricately organised in the great poems of *Sonâr Tarî*, *Kshanikâ*, *Balada* or *Purânî* could yet find comfort in the newly created domain of purely *vers libre* poems. His last poems are spare and intense, markedly short and often rhymeless, and yet they are as sunset-hued and night-starred as one would imagine any last poems to be.

The author has let us know that this 'persistent query' came from him, and to his response to his demand that Tagore wrote this sonnet, inscribing it in the (the author's) autograph book.—*Editor's Note.*

RENÉ SCHICKELE : A HYPHEN BETWEEN FRANCE AND GERMANY

KONRAD BIEBER

WHEN after decades of courageous advocacy for Franco-German understanding, René Schickele had to leave Germany and flee before the resurgence of nationalism under Hitler, it seemed as though all his efforts had been in vain. An era had come to its end. For unregenerated pacifists of Schickele's calibre, this was a bitter awakening. But, since it was not the first time he had to go into exile, Schickele did not give up the struggle. The first book he published after his emigration bears the significant title *Le Retour* (*Homecoming*) and its German version is proudly called *Die Heimkehr*. The German poet and novelist came back home into French culture which had never been foreign to him.

Born in Alsace of a father who continued a long family tradition of wine-growing, and of a French mother who did not speak any German, the young poet had, at an early age and in his very homeland, ample opportunity to compare the representatives of the two countries who had become increasingly bad neighbours. Critical of the Prussian boot and military arrogance, he became aware, at the same time, of the ridicule inherent in French dreams of revenge, such as they were rife in the days when pilgrimages were organized to the veiled statue of Alsace on the Place de la Concorde, in Paris.

Living at a time when his fellow-Alsatians were being courted both by Berlin and Paris, he strove for independence of mind. Growing conscious of the futility of all chauvinistic hatred, he advanced to the forefront of several groups of students and young writers, eager to bridge the gap between conflicting national ideas and to create the basis for a lasting union of the two countries, neither of which they wanted to see diminished by more wars, by a continuation of strife and military competition. At seventeen years of age, Schickele heads a literary review and from that moment on never once stops in his literary creativity nor in his earnest attempt at consolidating peace. The group of *Der Stürmer*, as Mr. P. Ackerman reminds us, "promoted an Alsatian literary renaissance dependent on neither

from her Germany, yet accepting the best in the cultural traditions of the two countries."¹

Schickele the poet has been amply discussed by German literary critics. He duly classified the different stages in his poetic evolution. A pertinent and valid characterization is given by Mrs. F. B. Bradley in her study of the outward failure of *Der Stürmer*, while recognizing that the endeavour was the nucleus of a meeting of the minds between Germany, France, and England. Schickele's life's work, she concludes, grew out of this seed, "his dream to unite in one peaceful garden the cultural forces of France and Germany which complement each other perfectly."² The same critic also sees "a singular combination of Romance structure and of Germanic rhythm" in the poems of the young Schickele.³ A definite feeling, she contends,⁴ for form and structure bespeaks the Romance heritage in Schickele, while he always proves to be deeply aware of the law of rhythm. Her points seem to be well taken, even though one detail may seem questionable—we are told⁵ that alliteration is a typical Germanic feature.⁶

Much has been said about Schickele's best-known play, *Hans im Glück*. Loaded with significance, the play still conveys its message of honest, struggling idealism. Written as it was during the early days of World War I, it sets an astounding mark of fairness in international exchange. Avoiding clichés rather successfully at the moment when they celebrated triumphs, its characters are, on the whole, true to life and clear of stereotypes. The author's own attitude is filtered through the conflict of opinions more than of emotions. Schickele's Hans, with a good measure of autobiographical elements, is fascinating in more than just the political or intellectual aspects. When he proclaims his love for France, it is the author's terrible loyalty to one of the two branches of his tree of life that is established. By the same token, the French deputy Cavrel, though to some degree a caricature of a Frenchman, voices Schickele's own thoughts when he asserts his admiration for Germany and her citizens, adding: "We could be proud to be called their friends, for they might need them . . .", an affirmation forecasting the political and cultural situation of the nineteen fifties and sixties.

Though an enthusiast for France as the country of the great culture, Schickele does not blind him to her shortcomings. In this, by far his best play, he called Frenchmen both "sublime and stupid like

the starry night"—"erhaben und dumm wie die gestirnte Nacht". But he finds their "fireworks" enchanting.

Hans blames the French for wanting war and declares they deserve to be crushed by the German steam roller. Yet, he adds, "I would have to tear my love for them right out of my heart, even though I should bleed to death." Then again he calls the French a "zebra-nation" whose one half wishes to march, as good citizens of the world, "an der Spitze der Menschheit"—leading mankind—, whereas the other half still holds for Napoleon...⁸ This may sound like a renegade's parting curse, but we get the balancing effect of a contrary statement, when Hans—the same Hans who at the outbreak of the war had envied the Prussian officer Starkfuss and had shouted, almost defiantly, his desire to "belong body and soul to the Germans, to be one of them, at this gruesome hour"—retains enough lucidity to judge the German national character with a severe clarity. Starkfuss having asked him: "Look at me—am I a wild beast? (ein reissendes Tier)", Hans retorts: "No, but you long to become one."⁹

Schickele, whose early fiction, strongly imbued with a poetic spirit, had sounded a prophetic warning before the threatening war, made an alarming and in many ways sobering prediction of the slaughter which was only at its beginning, when the play appeared. His antennae, already alert to any violation of the brotherly relationship which he dreamed all his life for his two native lands, perceived in their substance the coming horrors which he starkly denounced even before they became a sinister reality. Nor did his prophetic vision ever abandon him completely, although in some instances his predictions did not come true.

Hans im Schnakenloch also illustrates Schickele's strong plea for the adoption of *nuances*: whenever Germans speak of France or Frenchmen of Germany, he resents their gross oversimplifications and refuses to turn his back on either country, no matter how grievous the momentary offence of which they rarely fail to become guilty. If Hans in many ways reflects the author's own feelings, the hero of Schickele's novel trilogy, in like manner, resumes most of the pacifist and idealistic views of the poet. Claus von Breuschheim is different from Hans by his more reserved, distinguished, civilized behaviour. His sensuality recalls Hans' unrestrained thirst for adventures. But he is a more matured projection of some of the author's

book. At the same time, there are other striking parallels between the hero of the play and the narrator and protagonist of the novel. Both manifest an equal love for France and Germany. Both have a brother (or adopted brother as in the novel) who opts for Germany and probably represents yet another side of the schizophrenic ego of the Alsatian as he is torn between two cultures, two kinds of conflicting allegiances.

In the drama, speaking of Hans, his wife, Kläre, says to Hans' brother Balthasar: "Hans is afraid . . .", and he interrupts her with the word: "We" (i.e. the Germans) will replace the Phrygian helmet on top of all the freedom trees with our pointed helmet and change the world into a giant barrack. . ."¹⁰ In a strange shift of character, revealing Schickele's generosity of concept which refused to paint a totally black or fanatical partisan of Germany, Balthasar pursues: "Our great men belong to the English by the same right by which they cannot deprive us of theirs,"—a thought so cosmopolitan, so deeply humanistic that indeed the author had no alternative but to choose exile in Switzerland during the war.

Schickele's Germans, in this play, are also shown as decent, rather propagandous friends of France. Even Starkfuss, meant to embody German militarism, confides at a melancholy moment: "At this hour, in France there probably no longer is any friend either of peace or of Germany. They will fight with the deepest hatred and the courage of ultimate despair. They are a brave and free nation. I'd much rather march against the Russians."¹¹

How rich was Schickele's fairness in judging both the French and the Germans at the very moment both nations plunged in the madness of mutual extermination, it should be no surprise to find him confirmed in his deep-set pacifist conviction, once the blood-bath was over. A more mature, a quite realistic propagator of brotherhood between nations continues undaunted to voice his concern over the perpetuation of injustices, over bureaucratic vexations against Alsace and policies of revenge toward Germany. His novel trilogy, besides many psychologically disputable findings, demonstrates the keen observation of a man who devoted a lifetime to the study of things French and German as well as of the real people in both countries.

Here a word on the formation of Schickele the prose-writer may be in order. Normally, when we speak of journalists, we may tend

to discredit their methods, the level of their interests if not their intelligence. We should not lose sight of the fact that great poets in many countries tried their pen in reporting before settling down to more substantial creation. Schickele spent a good while in Paris as a reporter for a German daily. He later gathered some of his articles in a volume published before the First World War and re-edited, with a most substantial and telling preface, shortly after the war. We must be grateful to the poet for allowing us to follow his progression from the easy, almost facile, though amusing, tone of the mundane newsman to the stirring and deeply stirred interpretation of one country to its neighbour. Seen in this light, the sparkling gossip about the successful Parisian playwrights and actors of the nineteen hundreds, about the ups and downs of politicians, adds to our understanding of a France unaware of the deep changes the war was to bring with it.

But despite those frivolous and entertaining pages, René Schickele kept his eyes open to more worthwhile scenes, his ears cocked to the fundamental happenings in French politics. His description of Briand's handling of a strike is a document clearly reminiscent of Heine's *Französische Zustände*. Schickele cannot forgive Briand for his political opportunism of those days. He thereby demonstrates that he lacks the flexible spine of the born journalist. His is the testimony of a world citizen aware of his responsibility. That is what gives a unique touch to his brand of journalism. At the same time, the incipient writer notes the most striking features of the great of the world and will use them in his fiction when the time is ripe. Thus, "Maxime Simon", the fictional French foreign minister in the third volume of *Das Erbe am Rhein*, bears more than physical resemblance with the Briand the young reporter had so sharply criticized, while he gave a rather enthusiastic description of Jaurès. *Meine Freundin Lo*, published in 1910, had already fictionalized the portraits of these statesmen in much the same vein. In the long interval between those novelistic silhouettes, Schickele had edited *Die Weissen Blätter*, an outspoken forum for both literary *avant-garde* and pacifism.

If compared to the perceptive insight of a Heine, who reported to Germans on things French some seventy years prior to Schickele, the Alsatian's writing does not come off the ground. He lacks the variety of expression, the sheer brilliance of the merciless *charge*

Heine used to such advantage. Although Schickele's language is firm and often felicitous, it cannot reach the virtuosity of the punning and stunning author of *Lutezia*. In historical perspective, though, the twentieth century journalist is not unworthy of his great model.

It seen against the genial satire of a Kurt Tucholski who wrote from this same Paris to German newspapers, some fifteen years later than Schickele, the older poet does not achieve the lightness of touch nor the amusing detachment of a born reporter which, in Tucholski's case, gave way to genuine indignation, whenever a matter of principle aroused him.

We should not deplore this unfavourable comparison. For, when he is rated with the many good reporters of our century, Schickele still wins the crown for the depth of his understanding and, after all, he had the enormous advantage of being steeped with an equal intensity in both languages, both cultures. He himself is the first to recognize this natural advantage when, in the preface to *Schrei auf dem Boulevard*, he reminisces: "Born and raised in the celestial garden of torture—(im himmlischen Garten der Qual)—between the Rhine and the Vosges," he has inherited the qualities of either country. As for the Germans whom he saw in his childhood, they did not seem to foster warmth of feeling; he was sensitive to the "authoritarian guttural sound" of their voices;¹² he felt that Alsatian cities were being devastated in peace-time through the construction of "stupid tile buildings, into which, like in a pumping station, a ceaseless flow of foreign people with knives and rifles were thrown."

But this sensitivity to German high-handed violation of Alsatian pride culminates in the dramatic confession: "As in my dreams every night I thrust a bayonet into my own mother and implicated her into blood-curdling horrors the taste of which I could not lose even by day, I started taking sleeping pills."¹³ Seldom does a more forceful image occur in the allegory-woven pages of Schickele's work.

It may be objected that taking an Alsatian to demonstrate Franco-German friendship does not yield a conclusive picture, since native bias might blur the vision of the writer. Few Alsations have equalled René Schickele's European outlook; Ivan Goll's and Albert Schweitzer's names come to mind when this question is raised. None have surpassed Schickele's cosmopolitanism. On the contrary, by and large, Alsatian intellectuals, through the bitter experience of wars and the all too frequent alteration of their frontiers and of sovereignty, have

been pushed into one camp where they remained, having a hard enough time to adjust to a new national environment. The fact that Schickele overcame the one-sided national feeling of the vast majority of his fellow-countrymen is proof enough of his qualification as the spokesman for a Franco-German *rapprochement*. Then again, maybe some Alsatians will resent their country being called the "spittoon of two nations",¹⁴ even in a work of fiction.

Having had to fight out intra-national struggles in his own heart and mind first, the poet has gained greater insight into the problems inherent in his native province. "We had German names," he recalls, "but the world knows them through French history."¹⁵ He never shed his profound admiration for the French revolution nor his awareness of what the revolution had meant to his Alsatian forbears. That does not prevent him from feeling himself, and rightly so, as a German poet, the disciple of Goethe, Moerike, Heine, Eichendorff, Keller, and Novalis.¹⁶ Indeed, his very prose bears the hallmark of some of Eichendorff's narrative power, and sometimes clearly reminds the reader of Gottfried Keller, especially when it is a matter of social concern, of idealism, but also through the subtle but earthy use of humour in which he is akin to the Swiss poet.

His mind led a double life, as a melancholy mood made him say in his first book written in French, "serving French love with German words."¹⁷ Even if we discount the wilful wit of this formula, we cannot forget what Schickele so obviously owed to the great French humanists who made him the peace-loving mediator between nations. The French eighteenth century, just as well as the revolution it eventually generated, is an essential part in Schickele's formation. The fluctuation which political events inevitably caused him to undergo, is viewed with a fine sense of humour when his mouth-piece, Claus von Breuschheim, is shown, in 1918, taking what might be called a Schickele test, i.e., standing in front of a mirror, sticking his tongue out, "to see if (he) really was a Frenchman. If before the war I had considered myself quite often a 'frustrated Gaul—(einen verhinderten Gallier)'—I was puzzled by the command, no longer to feel frustrated. . . ."¹⁸ His reaction was necessarily the will to side with the underdog. He considered Germany's defeat as one more obligation to persevere in his pacifistic effort. The League of Nations must have seemed to him the ideal solution for any conflicts among nations. He was, nevertheless, too disillusioned a mind to

out of the theatrical trimmings of Geneva, and he sensed most acutely its forthcoming failure.

In the last volume of his long and at times trying novel, he once remarks: "If France and Germany should really become friends or allies—there would be no more reason for them to keep the trials of respect or future wars going."¹⁹ All he wants, as it is expressed in the closing pages of the novel, is a period of five years of leniency—*schlicht*—"and if possible a little love for each other." For five years he wants the two countries to see only what is good in the neighbouring nation, to see it, further it and express it. "For, up to the present have been sowing and reaping lies and wickedness from spring to autumn (literally 'to All Souls' Day'), and in winter they sit around the stove jealously reading how each slanders the other."²⁰

The five-year moratorium on hatred may appear only as the proposal of a dreamer. However, today's political and cultural co-operation between Adenauer's Germany and De Gaulle's France indicates the perfect feasibility of the proposed solution.

Therefore, when a French critic of Schickele finds that his work ended in failure,²¹ ideologically speaking, such a judgement must call for revision in more than one respect. Politically, Schickele's pioneer work is only beginning to bear fruit. Intellectually, there are many of the writers of the younger generations in both France and Germany who have proved their sincere concern with the betterment of mutual relations. Too many names would have to be cited here, but the fact is easy to verify, not only from the numerous meetings between French and German writers, but also through the papers in their books where they openly proclaim their belief in the necessity and possibility of lasting peace between their two countries. There are no longer just the dreams of a minority of intellectuals, dreams conceived in ivory towers. Now we witness an upsurge of repeated feeling for the need of complete understanding for the neighbouring nation and its culture.

Like Romain Rolland, René Schickele stands as the founder of this vast movement which has not reached its full development yet. Many are the poets who, on either of its banks, have glorified the Rhine. Few have done it with a profounder knowledge of all the obstacles to peace that have to be overcome, than Schickele. Few have given their words such poetic simplicity. In concluding these remarks, I can only attempt at capturing the spirit of Schickele's

views, when he wrote what sounds like a *credo*:

"The land of the Vosges and the land of the Black Forest were like the two pages of an open book. I could see clearly that the Rhine did not separate them, but united them... One of the two sides showed westward, the other eastward; on each was marked the beginning of a different, and yet related, song. The stream came from the south, flowing northward, uniting the waters from the east and the west to carry them as a whole towards the sea. This unifying stream with its lands stretching along its banks, these were Europe . . . and at any rate there could be no Europe without those countries as the Rhine kept them together through its seam, a seam forever remaining in the stream so that it would never tear or rot..."²²

¹ Ackerman, Paul Kurt, "René Schickele—A Bibliography", *Bulletin of Bibliography*, XII, (1956), p.p. 8-14.

² Bradley, Fracine B., *René Schickele, der Kampf um einen persönlichen Stil*, New York, 1942, p. 1.

³ *ibid.*, p.p. 2-3.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶ *Hans im Schnakenloch*, Berlin, 1915, p. 71.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 115.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 168.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 178.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 223.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 185.

¹² *Schreie auf dem Boulevard*, Berlin, 1920, p. 9.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁴ *Das Erbe am Rhein—Dritter Roman, Der Wolf in der Hürde*, Berlin, 1931, p. 158.

¹⁵ *Schreie auf dem Boulevard*, p. 19.

¹⁶ *Heimkehr* (translated from the French by Ferdinand Hardekopf), Strasbourg, 1939, p. 32; cf. preface by Hermann Kesten, p. 11.

¹⁷ *Heimkehr*, p. 27.

¹⁸ *Ein Erbe am Rhein*, vol. II, Munich, 1925, p. 213.

¹⁹ *Das Erbe am Rhein, Dritter Roman, Der Wolf in der Hürde*, p. 396.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 528.

²¹ Maxime Alexandre, "Littérature Alsacienne", in *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade*, ed. by Raymond Queneau, Paris, *Histoire des Littératures*, Tome III, *Littératures Françaises, Connexes et Marginales*, Paris, 1958, p. 979.

²² *Der Wolf in der Hürde*, p.p. 500-501.

(N.B. The discrepancy in the wording of the titles Nos. 18 and 19, is in accordance with the actual wording used in the copies consulted by me. The edition of Schickele's complete *Works* has harmonized the wording.)

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND

BENGALI PROSE

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BUDDHADEVA BOSE

THE prose of Rabindranath Tagore is as much a poet's work as his verse; at their best the two have the same quality and affect us in a similar fashion. If for a minute it were possible to imagine that the whole body of his verse had disappeared, leaving in our possession nothing but his essays, plays and novels, the palpable presence of a great poet would still shine through those proliferating pages of fiction, drama and essayistic prose.

It's literally true: his essays would give away the secret no less than his short stories or symbolical plays. And by the essay I mean not only forms like the memoir or travel-diary whose natural pliancy is favourable to poetic treatment, but also his discourses on set themes, his polemics, and his critical writings on history, religion, prosody and literature. There is a brilliance, a vibration, a certain inflexion of voice which means a little more than the topic or the content of the essay; and this vibration, which haunts and remains with us even when the theme has ceased to be exciting, we finally learn to identify with the unique personality of Tagore.

It has often been said or implied that poetry and discursive writing are incompatibles and Tagore's prose is defective because it is not logical enough. This view I can quite understand and have even been tempted to corroborate. Tagore's repetitions are far from few, his tangential passages are numerous; he uses imagery rather than reasons and metaphors rather than facts; he starts with the professed intention of proving a thesis and ends by sharpening our perceptions; where an intellectual debate is expected he makes the illicit move of producing enchantment.) Despite these defects, however, it is possible to extricate the message from metaphors when he is discussing matters like politics, education or social reform, but when literature—his dearest concern—is the theme, he becomes elusive to the point of apparently refusing to yield a tangible or workable hypothesis. At any rate he lays down no law, nor offers clean definitions; an extreme reluctance to arrive at a firm conclusion makes him contradict his own statements—may be within a minute of having made

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them. No one can deny that Tagore is not even a critic, in the sense that Aristotle or Anandavardhana is one.

Luckily, though, Aristotle and Anandavardhana are not the only models, nor could they have existed if non-critics like Sophocles and Kalidasa had not preceded them. Since creation is the primary thing and criticism ancillary to it, and it is impossible to theorise on literature except on the basis of examples, a figure compounded of a Sophocles and an Aristotle would be both improbable and monstrous. Yet creative minds of the highest order have in modern times applied themselves to criticism; and the results have little in common with the works of ancient theorists and commentators. A poet who writes on literature can do no better than 'make an art of criticism itself'; these are Tagore's words and they should serve as guide through his variegated prose. In him the poet and the prose-writer are inseparable and mutually complementary, which means that we cannot assess the one without considering the other, nor can we afford to forget that although his genius is manifested in various forms it remains a constant factor itself, inalienable and supreme, and incapable of being any other than what it is in order to please this or that reader. Whether we call it genius or personality or character, it is this that puts its mark on all that issues from him, whatever the shape or formal designation. Is his prose prolix? His verse is no less so. Ornate? Effusive? Imprecise? Each of these terms is applicable to his verse of some period or other. Just as his prose piece *Passing the Spring* is really a poem in the essayistic form, so are poems like *Ebār Phirāo More* (*Make me Return*) or *Basundharā* (*The World*) didactic or descriptive essays in verse. We could blame him for using verse and prose for the same or similar purposes, we could even say that in certain cases, where he writes prose in the poetic manner and uses prose matter in hundreds of lines of verse, he has done justice to neither; but can we, for these reasons, ever leave him aside? Tagore's faults are candid as children, they do not pretend or dissemble; they neither fear wary observers nor blanch when detected; fed and housed by a great father, they freely play in his halls and show no sign of diminution. Simple and all on the surface, they wink at us when we pull out our yardsticks to gauge how far they hinder perfection, for at times the genius which protects them is capable of consuming all questions in its flames. Tagore is a writer whom any one can any day decry but no one can ever do without

I am thinking of those who speak his language or read him in the original and this is where he is triumphant. A Tagore freed from his faults would not be Tagore at all; therefore, even while quarrelling with much of his doings, we accept him just as he is, and accept him whole. Not that we do not know of many other instances of excellence, but to us his lustre remains undimmed—and here I mean Bengalis of my generation whose attitude to Tagore swings between revolt and worship but never takes the form of indifference. We who were nurtured on him and to whom the world was revealed through his words, are now in a position to give a pitiless account of his failings, and to say in the same breath that, although we have travelled much and treasure the memory of many shrines, Tagore is the house-god whom we perpetually need.

But how so? Why this insistence on his being *necessary*? Is it because, if he had not composed the historical ballads of *Kathā o Kāhini*, our secondary schools would have lacked a Bengali book which is good verse as well as teachable to adolescents? Or because, without his *jana-gana-mana*, we could not have lit upon a national song which all Indians could accept without reservations? One can think of a few other ways in which Tagore has made himself indispensable: without the two thousand and odd lyrics for which he had himself composed the music, we could never have possessed whole repertoires of songs befitting weddings, funerals, nativities, meetings and every conceivable social or public occasion. His prose writings, too, are an inexhaustible source upon which journalists and public men can infinitely draw for appropriate quotations, no matter what the topic of the day may be. In Bengal and the whole of India Tagore has been elevated, or shall we say *reduced*, to an institution: he is an idol, a symbol of pan-Indian glory, a perennial prop for our national self-respect, and as such he is automatically accessible to whoever is born on the Indian soil. But it is not this formalised and devitalised Tagore that I should wish to stress, for public utility is very different from private enjoyment, and however easy it may be to invoke his authority in the beginning of all our ceremonies and in support of whatever creed we happen to hold, no reader can approach him, or any other poet, without a readiness to exert himself. However celebrated the name, a reader is always on his own; he can take nothing on hearsay; his job is not to join in the cheers of the multitude but to form a personal relationship with the book or author.

in question. And it is as an individual reader, and not merely as a member of a nation, that we must discover wherein the permanence of Tagore lies.

The great obstacle to a proper appreciation of Tagore is that he is both voluminous and unequal; the profusion and diversity of his works, comparable only to Goethe's, becomes bewildering when we reflect that, unlike Goethe, he has left no supreme single achievement by which we could justifiably judge him. Lacking a *Faust* and convenient 'romantic' and 'classic' periods, we try not to lose sight of any one of Tagore's aspects; it is this versatility, this phenomenal variety of his—which the extant translations make no attempt to suggest—that we seek above all to dwell on when introducing Tagore to a novice or foreigner. 'Mark this,' we like to repeat, 'Tagore used every literary form, painted, acted and created music, and there is scarcely anything on earth on which he did not write.' Lest the inexperienced should suppose that the piercing nostalgia of his lyrics is all he has to offer, we hasten to hold up his essays on down-to-earth social problems; likewise, we haul up samples of realism from his short stories just to show that his preoccupation with God did not prevent him from being very much a man of the world. All this is good work and has relevance to an appraisal of Tagore, but when, after having viewed him from all sides as it were, we try to find out the relation they bear to one another and to the whole, we instantly discover that poetry is the animating principle in all this extraordinary variety, and if Tagore were not a poet he would not have become any of the other things he was. His many—different 'aspects', famous though they are on their own right, issue from the same source and together form an organic whole; we cannot cut him up into sections, as a railway train into wagons, for he has the fluency and cohesion of water. Indeed, there could be no better image of his career than the one he himself used for this purpose—I am referring to *The Awakening of the Waterfall*, that prophetic poem of his youth in which for the first time he discovers and describes his possibilities: all Tagore's diversities may be likened to the turns and twists of a waterfall which flows the more excitedly for being impeded by boulders. Therefore, while not denying the usefulness of epithets like 'Tagore the poet', 'the essayist' or 'the playwright', we must recognise that they overlap and interpenetrate and refer fundamentally to one reality. (Poetry is the

elemental stuff in Tagore, and his prose is one of its manifestation. Not that the flame does not flag now and then—and that is as true of his verse as prose; but no one who was not a poet to the very bones could have produced a critical essay like Tagore's on Bengali nursery rhymes, or his works on prosody and linguistics, or the sequences of *Sahaj Pāth*, that shining little masterpiece of an alphabet book combining pedagogic excellence with an astonishing beauty of diction.

Here it would be apt to recall the very interesting passage in which Mallarmé identified rhythm with poetry and denied the existence of prose. 'Poetry,' he said, 'is everywhere in language, so long as there is rhythm—everywhere except on posters and the back page of the newspaper. In the genre we call "prose", there are verses—sometimes admirable verses—of all sorts of rhythms. Actually, there is no such thing as prose: there is the alphabet, and then there are verses which are more or less closely knit, more or less diffuse. So long as there is stylistic effort, there is versification.' I do not know how many hundred voices were raised in protest when Mallarmé penned these words, but if in the whole history of literature there is one poet who gives actual demonstration of this view, that, I must say, is not Mallarmé, nor his disciple, Valéry, but unquestionably Tagore. For the prose of these two French poets, like their verse, is highly complex and individuated; it is almost a language of signs and symbols; and they always choose 'pure' and incorporeal themes. Actually the only thing they write about is poetry, and to write on poetry is a job for which poets are, after all, professionally qualified. But Tagore uses what is known as the general style; his arrangement of sentences and paragraphs are not apparently different from others'; and it is not until the nineteen-twenties that we catch him consciously trying to elevate prose to the level of verse. Moreover, he was capable of writing on depressingly mundane subjects, such as current politics or even co-operative banking. That his prose has dull moments is therefore not surprising; the marvel rather is that so much of it, irrespective of subject-matter, is haunting and resonant, capable of taking possession of our memories and delighting us by its very presence. So strong is his intuitive sense of style and rhythm that it would be literally true to say that Tagore's characteristic prose is composed of 'verses—sometimes admirable verses—which are more or less closely knit, more or less diffuse.'

Apart from fiction and drama, Tagore's prose falls into a number of formal divisions: *belles-lettres*, literary criticism, essays on subjects other than literature, travel and autobiography, and finally, letters. These divisions, however, are far from being rigid, for Tagore has a splendid way of transcending all rules and definitions. His criticism, for example, is often written in the relaxed and intimate manner of *belles-lettres*; with the works of his youth, such as *The Five Elements*, *Ancient Literature* and *Folk Literature* we can never be sure to which of the two genres they should belong. Likewise, his letters and autobiographies are deficient in facts and many a page of his travel-diaries has little to do with his travels. Conversely, there is much of autobiography in his critical writings and of criticism in his autobiographies; brilliant speculations on life and art enter into his travel-books; his works on linguistics and prosody are at once analytical and evocative. All these kinds of writing are thus inter-related, and the relation between them and his poetry is quite palpable. This should be generally true of all poets who have also written prose, but the nature of this inter-relation exhibits considerable variety. The case of Coleridge, whose verse expired under the weight of his sombre prose, is a sad and splendid contrast to that of Tagore, who ran both simultaneously to the end of his life. Tagore was able to preach and practise at the same time, but the aim of his preaching was not to build up an ideal of poetry which would conform only to the kind he wrote himself: and in this he is very different from Mallarmé or Valéry. His method is different too: instead of lying in ambush and decoying the reader into his own way of thinking, or employing Mallarméan innuendos, he gives plain expositions which are not the less persuasive for being straightforward. And yet his autobiography, unlike Yeats's, does not reveal the sources of his poetic development; nor could we claim that his letters, like those of Rilke, are an indispensable commentary on his verse. What Tagore did was to repeat in verse what he had said in prose, and *vice versa*; in him the two forms not only complement each other but are sometimes almost interchangeable. Lest the acolytes of modernism should regard this as heretical, I hasten to adduce the example of Charles Baudelaire—the prime source of modern poetry—who enriched his prose by borrowing phrases, imagery and at times whole stanzas

from his verse, composed variations of the same poem in verse and prose, and whose poetry and art criticism occasionally sprang from the same material. All this is part of Tagore's practice, but where it differs from Baudelaire's is also important. Instances are not lacking where, using the same substance, Tagore is terse in prose and prolix in verse, while the prose of Baudelaire's essays is playful and even diffuse and his verse intensely concentrated. A case in point is Tagore's *Balākā*, a volume of odes regarded by many Bengalis as an achievement, where the best pieces, commemorating a long lost beloved in page after page of breathless verse, are an expansion and elucidation of what he had said in two quiet prose paragraphs in the 'Bereavement' episode of his autobiography. On the other hand, the eleven quatrains of *Les Phares*, Baudelaire's poem on the painters, contain the essence of the whole of his art criticism, and his essay on the comic spirit may be read as a philosophical elaboration of one little stanza where the poet calls himself 'a vampire who drinks his own blood, . . . condemned to eternal laughter because he never learnt to smile.' Baudelaire's prose gives the impression of a holiday: wearied by the hunt for rhymes, the implacable demands of the stanza-form, and the strain of embodying the ideal within the severe limits of the sonnet, he seems to divert himself in the freer spaces of prose, exercising his wit, his gaiety and partaking of the refreshment of social intercourse. I do not mean that Baudelaire's prose is not serious, or that he does not rank with the greatest in critical understanding; but his prose, however good, lays no claim to be the equal of his verse, or an alternative to it. Tagore, however, lets his poems run away with him, with the result that sometimes his verse is distinguishable from his prose only by the use of metre or a visually different arrangement of the lines. Not a few of his poems have what we might call prose matter; the message in these could be delivered as well or more effectively in prose; and this can be seen in much of the prose he wrote during the last two decades of his life. On comparing his travel-diary of South America with the poems he composed while there or crossing the seas, we are impressed by the ease with which he translated his prose into rhymed and sonorous stanzas. Again, in the novel, *Shesher Kavitā*, the prose is so marvellous that the poems thrown into it look rather pallid in comparison. Of the art of versification Tagore was so much a master that he suffered from this very mastery, as when, during his last phase, he

built poems round chance phrases or fleeting thoughts he had hit upon while sending off some letter or other—poems which add little to the prose in which the thought was first captured. Tagore's verse and prose did not develop on parallel lines—we realise this the moment we view them in their entirety; for his verse style did not undergo any fundamental change after the turn of the century, whereas his prose went through a series of metamorphoses right through the nineteen-thirties. In verse he was an emperor crowned by Nature herself, and a safe assumption for his countrymen and almost for himself was that any lines of verse would be poetry or at least well worth reading, simply because they bore his signature. But in prose he was much more of a conscious artist and aware of models and competitors in his own language, subject to unrest and the need for revisions, and incessantly striving to surpass himself.

Thus has this incredible thing happened to our literature that the greatest poet in the Bengali language is also supreme in prose. I say Bengali, but, once we except the creator of that eternity known as the *Mahābhārata*, he being one who makes all comparisons absurd, Tagore as a poet has absolutely no equal in the whole history of Indian culture. And it is he who created Bengali prose. This I do not mean historically, for he was not the first in the field, and a Bengali reflecting on prose cannot but dwell on the brilliant pioneers of the nineteenth century, such as Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and Bankimchandra Chatterji. To the latter we must make a special bow, for (Bankimchandra, the first Indian novelist in the modern sense of the word and the dictator of Bengali literary taste in his time) served long as Tagore's model both in prose and the technique of the novel. Nevertheless, Tagore did more to Bengali prose than any other writer before or after him; starting modestly on the footsteps of Bankimchandra he ended by changing his style so radically that the gap between Bankimchandra's early works and Tagore's later ones may appear to be not of one but several centuries. In the pages of Tagore is recorded the whole evolution of our prose from the point where Bankimchandra left off, for he (assimilated all viable innovations attempted by his successors and contemporaries, reflected all phases and transitions) and, through a series of daring experimentations, perfected what is now understood to be modern Bengali. The productions of the six decades of his working life constitute the microcosm of Bengali prose, and, judging by volume and variety,

its macrocosm as well. All moods and shades are there—the ponderous and the light, the simple and the ornate, ceremonial Sanskritisms and colloquial vigour, wit, fervour and gaiety, restraint and opulence, outspoken directness and the subtlest obliquity. Judging by the cool, measured and impeccably lucid periods of *My Reminiscences*, we can say that Tagore 'wrote like a gentleman'—in the eighteenth century English sense of the word; yet in the novel, *The Home and the World*, published only three years later, the style is almost suffocatingly rich, as loaded with rhetorical devices as a poem of Kalidasa's. Again in *Lipikā*, a volume of prose-poems and a very close successor to *The Home and the World*, we behold yet another act of this magician: here the artifice employed is the apparent rejection of all artifice; the sentences are short, the adjectives few, and the words chosen from the homely diction of men and women—I daresay of women in particular. What Tagore seems to be doing here is to take the speech of Bengali womenfolk—to whom are attributed many of our immortal fairy-tales—purge it of its 'folkishness' and vulgarisms, and extract the whole of its lovely and loving simplicity. Here, as in the earlier work, *The Post Office*, Tagore achieves miraculous effects by purifying and elevating the merely natural. (So great is the range of his prose style, and so frequent his alternations between rhetorical weight and sheer simplicity, that by studying him alone one can get to know all the modes of Bengali prose, all the styles that were and are living, and also those which contain the germs of the future) And there is no other Bengali writer of whom we can say this. Others have excellence of one kind or another, but in the single figure of Tagore is contained the essence of all that has happened to our language in modern times. With all respect to his forbears and successors, it is impossible not to recognise that he, our master-singer (is also the perfect mirror of Bengali prose.)

III

Bankimchandra, the greatest prose-writer before Tagore, began as a poet, but being both perceptive and wise, did not linger in that area. And Prāmātha Chaudhuri, the major prose-writer after Tagore, and only seven years younger, sometimes wrote verses which entertained himself and the reader but which neither took quite seriously.

Between these two comes Tagore, practising both verse and prose on a professional scale, but celebrated more as a poet, even in his own country. He begins with Bankim as his model, and he begins fairly early; the more his style matures, the further he gets from his predecessor, but there is a point up to which we can say that his moorings are still in Bankimchandra. And then, when he is fifty or thereabout, we see him join hands with Pramatha Chaudhuri in effecting what we call a revolution in Bengali prose; sundering himself from Bankim and his line, he creates what is literally a *new* prose and the voice of a new century.

I think it is necessary to explain in what this revolution consisted. It was a change-over from literary formalism to an approximation of living speech. A rather curious thing happened to Bengali prose writing at its birth in the early nineteenth century; the forms of verbs adopted in it were not those current in the speech of South-West Bengal, where this prose originated, but those used in medieval verse and retained in various East Bengal dialects. Clearly verse influenced the prose, which was natural since each new 'age' in literature must begin by imitating the forms of the immediate past. And then, the staple vocabulary of early Bengali prose, including that of Bankimchandra, was ponderously Sanskritic, and so was the tone of writing. Liaisons, compound words, feminine adjectives, as prescribed in Sanskrit grammar, were applied literally to Bengali, in clear violation of the modes of the spoken tongue. Thus it happened that our prose literature—not verse—embraced a kind of 'poetic diction' which was as far removed from living speech as, in eighteenth century England, was the verse of Alexander Pope. The abolition of this literary style—'literary' in the wrong sense—comprised one half of the revolution; the other half was of course the process through which the spoken idiom was launched and made triumphant. The struggle between *sādhubhāsha* and *chalitbhāshā*—or the 'noble' or 'elegant' and the 'common' or 'current' language, as we call them in Bengali—dragged on for years before the latter won the day—thanks to polemics of Pramatha Chaudhuri and the prodigious inventiveness of Tagore.

It must not be imagined, however, that the spoken idiom did not exist in written literature before this Tagore-Chaudhuri collaboration. In fact it was there from the very beginning. Samples occur in William Carey, an English missionary who contends with one or

to be the honour of having written the first Bengali prose book. However, did no more than compile literal samples of Sanskrit, but soon after him came two authors who wrote for the contemporary society in the dialect of South-West Bengal which was then disparaged as vulgar but later formed the basis of modern Bengali. One of these two was Kaliprasanna Sinha, who, before he died at the age of thirty, gave away princely sums for the development of Bengali literature, married twice, entertained many and their mistresses, edited and sponsored a prose translation of the complete *Mahābhārata*, and wrote a little book called *Hutom the Owl* (*Nakshā*), which has since found its way into our library of classics. The style of his *Mahābhārata* is grand and sonorous; it is in a way *sādhubhāshā* at its very best and as much like Sanskrit as Bengali can conceivably be, and though he hired pundits to get the translation completed, it was he who set the tone to the whole. Yet, writing under the pen-name of 'Hutom the Owl', he surprised his contemporaries by his brilliant use of the *lap-dash* Bengali which the new rich of Calcutta actually spoke in those days. And then of course there were the playwrights of the nineteenth century, among them Jyotirindranath, the favourite brother of Tagore, and they annexed new areas for the current speech. Nevertheless, *sādhubhāshā*, the so-called elegant style, remained the style for reputable literature for a whole century; the only exception to this was the drama, which sometimes made up for poverty. The reason for this is the immense influence of Bankimchandra, who, the author of *the Sketches of Hutom* having died early, was the only prose writer of his time worthy of imitation, and whose novels were a phenomenal success. And Bankimchandra was stylistically a purist, so much so that he made his characters talk in 'the language of books', at least in respect of the forms of verbs. And for the young Tagore his example was compelling.

Tagore, however, was ambidexterous in his prose writings. I mean to say happy either way; the books he wrote specifically for publication—again with the exception of plays—were all in *sādhubhāshā*, but his letters and travel-diaries, starting from the earliest ones, were written in a conversational style which lacked neither grace nor power nor confidence. Thus the prose that Tagore wrote from youth to middle age falls into two distinct groups—the public and the private, or the 'official' and the 'homely'; and although I do not mean the

former term in a pejorative sense, I must say that some of his correspondence of this period, written in vivid colloquial Bengali, make better use of the resources of our spoken language than any other work of the time. His *Letters from Europe*, for instance, written when he was scarcely turned eighteen and sojourning in England for the first time, astonishes us by their difference from the 'official' prose of his juvenilia; for in them Tagore is already a truant from the school of Bankim; the style with its rapid pace and clean sharpness of idiom gives the impression of the living voice. Still more remarkable is the collection now called *Chhinnapatra*—a collection of letters sent to folks at home while Tagore was moving up and down the river Padma through the heart of Bengal and looking after the family estates. He was in his early thirties then and writing some of his greatest poems and short stories; but these letters, tossed off in apparent carelessness and certainly not meant as 'literature', were published as an afterthought and not until he was past his fiftieth year. Yet I daresay this little volume is one of Tagore's best, for never before or after had he written a series of letters—I mean real letters and not essays in the epistolary form—where the impressions are so vivid, the style so lively, or where his romantic sensibility blended so well with irony and worldly wisdom. Of course I can judge only by the present state of our knowledge; but supposing a new batch of letters is brought to light, of equal or superior merit, *Chhinnapatra* would still remain one of those rare books which are infinitely readable and remain eternally young. How strange to reflect that although he had mastered *chalitbhāshā* at thirty, Tagore continued for two more decades in the style of formal elegance in all works meant for the public! But perhaps it was not so strange, really, for the old style had still some vitality, which it was left to him to exploit before launching the new.

I hope I am not understood as saying that books in *chalitbhāshā* are necessarily better than those in the old style. That would verge on absurdity. The best of our nineteenth century prose is very good indeed; and much of Tagore's best is in *sādhubhāshā*. What should be noted, though, is that once having adopted the new style—for public as well as private purposes—Tagore never went back to the old; and as time passed, more and more writers of the younger generations were won over by his example. By the time he died in 1941 there hardly remained an area which *chalitbhāshā* had not

taken over and today the once-lauded 'elegant style' is stepping downhill toward oblivion by way of school-texts and newspapers.

Another thing that Tagore did to Bengali prose was to impart movement. In saying this I am not counting the distinction between *sādhū* and *chalitbhāshā*, for in his case both have the same kind of movement, though not to the same degree. I am rather trying to define the difference, in terms somewhat more precise, between his prose and let us say Bankimchandra's. Not that Bankimchandra did not have movement—it is impossible to write either prose or verse without movement of some sort—but Tagore made the language *flow*, giving it a flexibility we do not find in his elders. The quality of charm was there in Bankimchandra—and he was the first to possess that quality—but the charm of his prose was of the sort we find in rhymed and regular verse to which it seems to me it owed a great deal. Bankim uses repetitions as poets do refrains; at times he misses being metrical only narrowly, and his use of the caesura balancing a remark and a repartee, is clearly reminiscent of the verse of Bharatchandra or Alexander Pope. His sentences are like trained soldiers marching across a plain; their movement is ordered and slow, their progress linear, and the link between them is the logical one of a common purpose. These, too, on the whole, are the characteristics of Pramatha Chaudhuri, as we have latterly come to realise, the strife between *sādhū* and *chalitbhāshā* being ended. The fact is that Pramatha Chaudhuri's profession of the new style was a result of his intellectual conviction; temperamentally he had more in common with Bankimchandra than with Tagore. So it happens that Tagore's prose had a quality we do not find in the two great writers before and after him, nor in all later writers who should have gained by his example. And this quality is neither order, nor charm, nor brilliance—these the others have; it is fluency, the feeling of high-powered motion, of amplitude and overflow.

It seems to me that Bankimchandra built up his prose in a succession of single sentences, but in Tagore the unit is the paragraph, and the link between the paragraphs and the sentences of which they are composed, is provided not merely by grammar or logical coherence, but by another element, less easy to define, which remains off stage as it were and yet animates the whole. It is something like the pulse-beat in the body of a living animal, and this we can finally recognise as the very rhythm of the language. This rhythm—of which

Mallarmé spoke—is what was lacking in Bengali prose before Tagore and which he brought to it. Tagore's sentences do not merely follow a logical sequence, but remain sensuously in touch with one another; they are like a troupe of ballet dancers who have plastic limbs and sinuous movement and who can produce the most overwhelming effects by doing not what is expected but what is barely felt to be possible. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that they satisfy our immortal longing for harmony, and by harmony I mean an organisation which can combine a very great variety of movement, including dissonance and violation of symmetry. In Tagore's prose long and short sentences jostle one another; meandering complexities lead to an abrupt decision couched in a statement of two words; no two consecutive sentences begin or end in the same way, and closed and open sounds caressingly alternate. And Tagore does all this intuitively, with an apparent ease which baffles us all, and he does this in a language whose resources, when he came to it, were certainly small compared to English or French. The syntax of the English language clearly influenced him, as it did both Bankim and Vidyasagar, and though certain unworthy moderns are sometimes blamed for writing Bengali 'in the English way', I must say it was Tagore who showed how much Bengali can gain in speed, strength and richness by adopting parentheses, inversions and several other devices which are common in English and all other languages which have developed a prose literature. Without these devices prose would be incapable of expressing any but simple and rudimentary thoughts; and I do not know in what sense they are 'English' except that we received them through the English tongue. But once Bengali adopted the various forms of modern punctuation, it was inevitable that its own native genius should lead it along the same course of development as that of modern European languages, whose various modes were similarly influenced by punctuation, and of which Bengali has now become a competitor. Perfected by Tagore, this new syntax is the style of modern Bengali, it is absurd to say that any such thing as a 'pure Bengali syntax' is any longer possible, or that our prose has corrupted itself by deviating from the norm of medieval verse-couplets, which trudged as best as they could on the stilts of their single and double stops. The truth is that the style of Tagore makes full use of the natural rhythm of spoken Bengali; neither stuffily Sanskritic nor loosely colloquial, it is rather an idealised form of the

living speech of his countrymen. The very inflexions of our voice, ranging from assertion to the whispered word, from dejection and doubt to passionate belief—all this is heard in the prose of Tagore. In other words, it is rhythmic in the way of prose, and removed as far as possible from metrical beats; it moves in the same way as the *alap* or overture of Indian music, which follows tempo, but rejects melodic measure. Bankimchandra, who tried his 'prentice hand on verse, made his prose distinctly reminiscent of that early encounter; but Tagore, *the* poet, writing prose as only a poet can, never admits in it the faintest echo of metrical effects, not even in the prose-poems of his later years. And this, I think, is his great achievement as a prose writer. He realised that rhythmic prose is not something which falls between prose and verse, but belongs to prose proper, its aim being the maximum intensity available to non-metrical language. 'Tagore's prose,' as Atulchandra Gupta has observed, 'is the prose of a great poet, and therefore nowhere like verse.' This 'therefore' seems to me meaningful.

BEAST OR ANGEL ?

ROMANTIC AMBIGUITIES IN GOETHE, MUSSET, STENDHAL AND YEATS

DAVID McCUTCHION

O pureté! pureté! — Rimbaud

No mind can engender till
divided in two. — Yeats

I

THE reader of romantic literature comes across two kinds of romantic hero. On the one hand the superman, larger than life, striding the world like a colossus and inspired from Shakespeare or the legendary past (Prometheus, Hermann, Richard III, Tamburlaine . . .). Such are Schiller's Karl Moor, Goethe's Egmont, Byron's Manfred, Yeats' Red Hanrahan. Götz von Berlichingen dies with "Freedom!" on his lips, and, as Karl Moor cries, "The law has never yet formed a great man, but freedom breeds forth colossi and extremes." They display unbridled strength, courage, passion . . . above all passion: Tristan, Romeo, Hernani. Such is the *Kraftskerl* of *Sturm und Drang*—Klinger's Otto, Müller's Faust—storming individualists, defying all conventions. The romantic superman, embodiment of lost tribal energy, is regarded with the same kind of nostalgia as Homer adopted towards his ancient heroes, who hurled rocks in battle "such as ten men of the present age could not lift." With the French Revolution such men seemed to walk again on earth—Danton, Robespierre, and subsequently the greatest romantic hero of them all: Napoleon.

However, with the possible exception of Victor Hugo, the romantics were not themselves supermen—they tended to be delicate and introspective—and it may be questioned whether the leaders of the French Revolution were supermen either. But the romantics would be satisfied with nothing less than being supermen and living in a world of supermen. Above all the sordid mediocrity of everyday life must be refused. Alas! as Burke had already pointed out:

The age of Chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and

calculators has succeeded; . . . It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness.

Thus arose the anti-type of romantic hero—the sensitive, suffering, exalted soul pining in an alien world: Werther, René, Musset's "child of the century", or Shelley (in spite of his annuity) bleeding on the thorns of life.

They live in a state of melancholy yearning and indecision, for their yearning has no clearly defined object:

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow;
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

Chateaubriand says of René: "A melancholy hankering drew him deep into the woods." He nurses some dark and ineffable secret: "I walked with great strides, my face aflame, the wind whistling in my hair, feeling neither rain nor frost; enchanted, tormented, and as though urged on by the demon of my heart" (This kind of romantic hero) wanders among the ruins of Greece and Rome, reflecting on the transience of earthly glory—an attitude taken over from the eighteenth century, incidentally (Pope, Addison . . .). (He loves at a distance, but if the ideal is put to closer test, it fails him, and he suffers agonies of jealousy and self-reproach. He is out of place in modern society, a misfit, an outsider: "to be misunderstood is the lot of our kind," laments Werther, who, like Vigny's Chatterton, commits suicide rather than fight the world on its own terms. He mourns the loss of religion, is moved to tears by the beauty of cathedral and mass, but remains too proud to submit to God. He is obsessed by death, the sweet deliverance, and sings like Novalis Hymns to Night by the grave of the beloved. His will is paralysed, life has no meaning, and he finally makes of his suffering a value in itself: "Nothing makes us so great as a great sorrow does," sang Musset in his *Nuit de Mai*, and René declared: "My grief had become an occupation.") (Hamlet, by contrast, the archetype of all this, was involved in a moral conflict far more real.)

(The cult of sensibility, coincident with that of romantic energy

and associated in particular with Rousseau, goes back far into the eighteenth century.) George Sand was by no means the first to assert: "Nothing is strong in me except the need to love." (Goethe's Werther, unable to break free from a helpless infatuation, may be traced back to *Manon Lescaut* (1731) and beyond.) Des Grieux' passion is one long martyrdom in which he abandons everything to love, and in spite of Mannon's repeated betrayals will follow her into exile. One can imagine the comment of Lord Chesterfield! Both Werther and Des Grieux are victims of their sensibility—Werther the dreamer and lover of Nature, examining the insects and the blades of grass, immersed in his Homer, is quite unfit for the world of contracts and material needs.) An even more extreme case is the hero of Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* (1771), whose sensibility was so delicately organised that when his proposal of marriage was accepted, he died on the spot:

He seized her hand—a languid colour reddened his cheek—a smile lightened faintly in his eye. As he gazed on her, it grew dim, it fixed, it closed. He sighed and fell back on his seat.—Miss Walton screamed at the sight.

(Clearly the cult of sensibility is incompatible with the cult of energy, and if we examine some of the romantic supermen, we find that they usually share the weakness of their creators.) Klinger's Otto is an inflated adolescent, full of posturing rage, but liable to burst into tears if frustrated. Karl Moor yearns for the lost innocence of his childhood and finds it again in a sweet girl's love ("She forgives me . . . ! I am pure . . . !"). Love redeems all: Hernani even abandons his sworn vengeance when united by Don Carlos with his Dona Sol. They are schoolboy heroes rather than real warriors. The sensibility of the romantics peculiarly unfitted them to understand the fighting virtues they so admired: courts and battlefields were equally foreign to their experience. When Schiller makes King Philip II of Spain weep for loneliness after the only man he trusted has betrayed him (the scene which so moved the schoolboy Tonio Kröger), we feel this is maive and theatrical. For similar reasons, Herder could not detect the sentimentality and weary defeatism of the "Ossian" poems, which he took for genuine folk poetry.

(At the heart of the romantic sensibility we find this conflict between the ideal and the real—and it takes many forms: not only the con-

ment between the romantic ideal of energy and the delicate sensitive nature of a poet, or between reason and feeling, but most acutely between their exalted ideals of love and morality and their actual behaviour: Chateaubriand's false humility, Hugo's treatment of his wife. In short it was impossible to be the kind of man they wrote and dreamed about. (They were the victims of Rousseau's sentimental optimism: man is naturally good.) But Christian theology had long before analysed the divided nature of man midway between the spiritual and material realms partaking of both. As Pascal said: "L'homme n'est ni ange ni bête, et le malheur veut que qui veut faire l'ange fait la bête." Now the romantics in their turn, deprived of the doctrines of sin and grace, finding Rousseau inadequate, had to come to terms with their own divided selves. So arose that theme of which *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a comparatively late and somewhat crude variation.

(It was an early solution to divide the self in two and treat the halves separately: Goethe is both Faust and Werther, Egmont and Clavigo. In *Götz von Berlichingen* we find Georg der goldene Junge, the German archetype of pure-hearted youth, eager, bold and true, who dies a hero's death, and Weislingen with the same "friendly light brown eyes and beautiful blond hair" but corrupted by the court, who dies poisoned by his wife after betraying the friend of his youth for her sake.) No ambiguities here: Rousseau is still accepted as valid. Alfred de Musset describes himself in *The Confession of a Child of the Century* as "alternatively hard and mocking, tender and devoted." "There was constantly in me a man who laughed and another who wept." The hero of *Lorenzaccio*, the most Shakespearian of Musset's "armchair" plays, is a projection of its author's double nature. As a boy Lorenzaccio had been inspired by the example of Brutus to free his city from the tyrannous Medici, and in order to contrive an opportunity to assassinate the reigning Duke, he has ingratiated himself into his favour, become the companion of his debauches. The contact with reality has disillusioned and corrupted him. His youth had been "pure as a lily"—"a holy love of truth shone on his lips and in his black eyes." He was full of sympathy for the oppressed and love for his fellow men. But now: "I have become vicious, cowardly, an object of shame and disgust." He no longer believes in "virtue, modesty and liberty"—humanity has revealed to him "its monstrous nakedness": "I would have wept

with the first girl I seduced, if she had not started to laugh." All idealism comes up against human nature: the world is no place for good men. What purpose do they serve? They are weak and inept: "What is the good of a living conscience if the arm is dead?" As for himself, there is no return to innocence. He carries out his plan knowing its futility. When he assassinates the Duke, the lovers of liberty who should have supported him, are divided by their vanities, unable to make concerted action. The Duke's cousin is elected to succeed him, and Lorenzaccio is assassinated. Tyranny continues.

There is a profound ambiguity in all this. Is any man fit to be Duke? Do people really want liberty? And is Lorenzaccio so innocently guilty? For he does not only have a horror of vice—he also loves it. "I love wine, gambling and women" he tells the virtuous Philippe Strozzi—"can you understand that?" To achieve his single act of virtue, he plunges to the depths of depravity, even proposing to his modest aunt that she become the mistress of the Duke, and causing the death of his mother. It would be difficult to say at exactly what point his horror of vice would be strong enough to overcome his love of vice.

In *Les Caprices de Marianne* the two sides of Lorenzaccio's nature—his love of debauch and his horror at its corrosion, his sentimental idealism and his cynical realism—are divided between two characters: Coelio the romantic lover and Octave the libertine. Coelio's love for Marianne is absolute: rejected by her, "I have nothing left but to die." Octave advises him to look up Rosalinde, who may be seen at her window in the market place, but Coelio is horrified: "Love, which for the rest of you is just a pastime, disturbs my whole life." He cannot rest, he cannot eat, he cannot stay at home, he hovers round the house of Marianne night and day, plays serenades and is scorned for his pains, but cannot keep away. He is the helpless victim of a compulsion beyond all explanation—a true child of Werther. And just as Werther's feelings towards Lotte are religious ("She is holy to me", "an angel", "pure"), so Coelio is devotional in his love for Marianne: she is perfect, no one could replace her, he quakes at the knees when she approaches. Octave on the other hand likes hunting, dining and good company. His main worry is not love, but escaping his creditors. Women are provided for the pleasure of men, and he asks Marianne how old she is.

Nineteen? "You still have five or six years to be loved, eight or ten to love someone yourself, and the rest to pray." He has none of Lorenzaccio's scruples about wine, gambling and women: "My character is to be drunk." When Coelio comes across him all dressed up for carnival and sighs: "How happy you are to be mad!" Octave rejoins: "How mad you are not to be happy!"

But their relationship is not the normal one of contempt between idealist and rake. For Octave loves Coelio as "the better part of myself," and after the death of Coelio (for love), pays a long tribute to his pure and delicate-souled friend, which becomes a lament for the lost ideal self:

He alone knew how to pour into another soul all the springs of happiness hidden in his own. He alone was capable of a limitless devotion; he alone would have dedicated his entire life to the woman he loved; just as readily he would have braved death for her.

With the death of Coelio, the springs of all joy have died within him:

Farewell the gaiety of my youth, the carefree madness, the free and joyful youth at the foot of Vesuvius! Farewell the boisterous meals, the evening talks, the serenades beneath the golden balconies! Farewell Naples and her women, the masquerades by torchlight, the long suppers in the forest shade! Farewell love and friendship! My place is empty on earth.

And when Marianne offers Octave her love: "I don't love you, Marianne; it was Coelio who loved you!" Without the spirit of youth and idealism, love is impossible. Here Musset takes up the theme of Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: illusion is necessary for life and art.

But the ironies go deeper. For when Marianne, at first a prude with an elderly husband, is finally persuaded to take a lover, it is not Coelio she wants, but Octave. Coelio she rejects: his dog-like adoration, afraid even to speak to her directly, fills her with irritation. Her intuition warns her against this lover who worships her more as a goddess than a woman. It is the coarse realist she loves, who cannot love her. Opposites attract. This was to become a recurrent theme with Yeats:

Some have known . . .

A girl that knew all Dante once
Live to bear children to a dunce.

That is from one of the Last Poems. Thirty years earlier he had written: "... the false lovers who do not become melancholy or jealous with honest passion have the happiest mistresses and are rewarded the soonest and by the most beautiful."

(The romantics were always dismayed by the ambiguous nature of love: part worship of purity, part desire to possess. And once possessed, the purity vanishes. It is the mystery at the heart of creation: why should the perfect become imperfect?) In Yeats' terms, why should the spirit enter the phases of the moon?

Why must those holy, haughty feet descend
From emblematic niches . . . ?

For desecration and the lover's night.

Blake had contrasted innocence with experience, and told of the worm at the heart of the rose. His serpent forces its way into the Chapel all of Gold and draws its slimy length all the way to the altar:

Vomiting his poison out
On the bread and on the wine.

(So Werther is horrified to find his pure vision of Lotte sullied by lustful dreams. In *Poetry and Truth* Goethe analyses *Weltschmerz* as the longing to escape from change, from the endless futile recurrence of events. "And nothing is more likely to cause this disgust with life than the recurrence of love." For love is the projection of absolute desires and the craving to satisfy them in time. There can be no consummation with Lotte: Werther prefers suicide. If she had not escaped into her room that night? If she had left Albert for Werther? If she had had as many children as brothers and sisters? Then what would have become of Werther? A *père de famille*? Back to the Embassy? *Das Dämonische* abandoned for *das Bürgerliche*? As it is, he dies with his absolutes intact.)

(Another aspect of the romantic dilemma is loss of spontaneity: the *Schmerzskinder* think too much. As Yeats would put it: those who think, can't act; those who act, can't think.) This is the contrast

between Egmont and Werther. Egmont has no patience for discussions—princes' councils and solemn debates: "Out into the fields. . ." he cries, leaving all worrying and explaining "to scholars and courtiers." He merely gets irritated with his secretary who insists on examining the very difficult problem of how to raise money—money must be raised, and that's that. He has no time for care and apprehension: "Does the sun shine for me today that I may ponder on what happened yesterday?" This refusal to think, this rejection of all caution, so that he pays no attention to the warnings of his friends, finally of course delivers him into the trap sprung by his enemies. But it is the role of Egmont to surrender spontaneously to his destiny. In prison, for the first time (like Faust before his death), he is visited by Care, and like Faust transcends this momentary defeatism—by acknowledging the spirit of history working through him: he dies on the scaffold, and by the example of his sacrifice will inspire the people of the Netherlands to fight for their freedom from the Spanish oppression. For Egmont is the embodiment of Goethe's theory of *das Dämonische*, an impersonal force which seizes hold of certain men and works through them for purposes beyond their full understanding (God in history, as taught by Herder)—this power gives them the strength to sweep all before them and hold men spellbound; like Napoleon, they are "men of destiny". It is this daemonic force which gives Egmont his strength, energy and confidence. This is the source of his freedom: "he knows no danger." Goethe gave a metaphysical twist to the romantic cult of energy.)

[What a contrast with Werther! Where Egmont is reckless, Werther dare not even seize the object of his desires. Where the will of history works through Egmont, Werther's will is broken by despair. Goethe makes it quite clear in *Poetry and Truth* that Werther is not merely a victim of frustrated love. Even Lotte realizes this: "I fear, I fear it is only the impossibility of possessing me, which makes the desire so enticing for you." For Werther is sick unto death long before he meets Lotte with the disease the romantics attributed to Hamlet: morbid introspection. He is a pure soul alienated from an evil world, a lover of the ideal who will not compromise with reality. And Lotte with her "innocence" and "purity" is a substitute for God. The metaphysical urge is as strong in him as it is in Egmont. Like Egmont he stands apart from his fellow men, a superior being. He is subjective like Egmont, he follows

his feelings, and despises the punctillious official world or the complacent bourgeois world. He feels the urging of the daemonic spirit within him: like Egmont he wants to rush out from the buildings of men into the world of nature: "climb a precipitous peak . . . press my way through a trackless forest, through the hedges which tear me, past the thorns which scratch me—then I feel better!" But Werther is a sick Egmont: he is afflicted with self-consciousness—his Daemon is inhibited! So that when he talks of his "destiny", it is merely self-dramatisation. As his "destiny" draws nearer, he seems more and more to be enacting a literary role, and his submission to the will of the universe, as Goethe points out in his autobiography, owes more to English literature (Goldsmith, Gray, Young, Ossian) than to the universe. His final attitude is full of self pity: remember me in the cold grave as you climb the mountains of a summer evening, he writes to Lotte; and addresses Nature: "Grieve then, Nature! your son, your friend, your beloved is nearing his end."

(*The Sorrows of Young Werther* is a fascinating case study simply because Werther is so self-conscious, so acute at setting down on paper his own condition. Like his French successors, he has a passion for self-analysis: in fact the letters comprise a passionate self-justification. Werther does not act, he writes—and we remember what Götz von Berlichingen said about the "busy idleness" of writing his memoirs when he might be out performing fresh deeds, or Karl Moor's disgust with "this ink-blotting century", or Faust who was so offended at the idea: "In the beginning was the word", that he changed it to "In the beginning was the deed". Werther combines sharp intellectual clarity with complete failure of the will: "How clearly I have always grasped my situation, yet acted like a child; and still now grasp it so clearly; yet with no sign of any improvement." René, Adolphe, and the rest share the same lucidity: if they do not act, it is because they think. They are caught in the web of their own endless justifications and self-examinations. The more they penetrate their predicament, the more inextricably they become enmeshed. Like Sénancour's Obermann, they withdraw from society, their attention turned inward seeking to understand what they are.)

(Whatever happens, I must always stay the same, always myself, not exactly as I am in my habits, which are contrary to my needs,

but as I *feel* myself, as I *want* to be, the way I am inside my inner self, the only asylum for my sad affections.

But all conclusions are in vain—the self cannot be fixed and outside nothing is certain; they remain the victims of incurable scepticism, “debeherited” by Montaigne and Hume.)

Adolphe (1816) by Benjamin Constant is the classic of the genre. This young man is disillusioned even before he enters on life: “I found that no goal was worth any effort.” From sheer boredom and egoism, he decides to make love to the mistress of the Comte de P. For months he plays the role of passionate devotee: “My love was my religion.” But when she finally yields to him: “Ellénore was doubtless a keen pleasure in my existence, but she was no longer a goal, she had become a bond.” Too late: love and gratitude have made a break impossible. His sensibility prevents him from hurting her. Thus ensues the paralysing conflict between self-interest and the claims of affection, between sense and sensibility, head and heart. On the one side Ellénore has abandoned the security of an accepted position in society and prejudiced the future of her two children; on the other, Adolphe will ruin his own career if he continues to stay with her. It is an archetypal situation of French fiction, the influence of which may be traced in many contexts, as for instance in Tolstoy’s analysis of the relationship between Anna Karénina and Vronsky. Their love degenerates into a succession of quarrels and reconciliations, mutual sacrifices and the resentment of deeper involvement: “Frankness on my part led to grief on hers, and her grief imposed on me a fresh dissimulation.” Each time Adolphe determines to break with Ellénore, his conviction fails him in her presence. Only her death can finally release him. Adolphe is able to analyse his situation with ruthless clarity, yet he can do nothing to change it. Constant himself delivers judgement on his hero:

I hate this complacency of a mind that believes it excuses what it explains; I hate this kind of self-centered vanity, preoccupied with recounting the harm it has done, which aims to attract pity by describing itself, and which, soaring indestructibly over the crime, prefers analysis to repentance.

But this uncompromising judgement on himself is only part of the same dilemma it condemns.

finds them selfish and mean—and yet also good. As Rimbaud learnt “the vision of justice is the pleasure of God alone.” His ideal is true but truth is everywhere in conflict with itself. What attitude can a writer take to such a world? In so far as he abandons his absolutes he becomes a cynic or at best a satirist taking refuge in irony; in so far as he retains them, he is moved to tears. For man is a bundle of contradictions: not Rousseau, but Pascal had grasped the truth or Pope:

Virtuous and vicious every man must be
Few in the extreme, but all in the degree;
The rogue and fool by fits is fair and wise;
And even the best, by fits, what they despise.

The problem remained: how to retain values and ideals within a secular vision. Must the best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity? How was doubt to be mastered?

The children of Werther dominate the nineteenth century, it turns rebellious or despairing, Satanic or decadent: Baudelaire, Verlaine, Laforgue... Byron, Shelley, Swinburne... With Franz Kafka their anguish reached its most acute form: a metaphysical despair more intellectually profound than any the nineteenth century had imagined. But even while Kafka lay tormented with his sick headaches, another extraordinary mind with greater resources of energy and confidence, was grappling with the problem. Yeats had begun as one of the “sick children of the world” of whom he speaks in the first poem of his first published volume. His early volumes go through all their attitudes: “Where are now the warring kings?” “Who will go drive with Fergus now?” Only words are left: deeds belong to the past. He seeks “Eternal beauty wandering on her way” and his beauty is sad, like Baudelaire’s—but not ardent: “cloud-pale eyelids, dream-dimmed eyes”—the beauty of Swinburne. The poetry is heavy with longing for death and weariness with life (the graveyard melody) that Goethe pointed to in English poetry as the origin of our gloom.—Gray’s *Elegy*, Young’s *Night Thoughts*, and above Ossian: “Then the Caledonian night shone with moonlight; long since perished heroes, long-since faded maidens hovered about us...” Goethe recalls in *Poetry and Truth*. Yeats revives all this in the Celtic Twilight. Like Werther he turns away from life into the world of dreams, withdraws to the Lake Isle of Innisfree and

Wenther to Wahlheim: "live alone in the bee-loud glade." For life is harsh and full of disappointment. . . . But when life actually proved to be harsh and full of disappointment, an extraordinary change came over Yeats' poetry which made him the greatest poet of his age. Yeats had begun as a sentimental Platonist. But while in his poetry he was pursuing "the phantom, beauty, in a mist of tears," in real life he was pursuing Maud Gonne and an Irish Literary Renaissance. But Maud Gonne married "a drunken vainglorious brute", and the attempt to establish an Irish National Theatre came up against the obtuse hostility of public and clergy. Parnell fell the victim of a sordid intrigue. The dream of Independence with dignity foundered amidst party squabbles and vulgar ranting. Disillusion followed. This was the point at which the disappointed lover and nationalist might have more and more withdrawn into his vision of perfection, or like his friend George Russell taken to the path of mystic quietism. On the contrary: Yeats suddenly realized his vision was an abstraction, "impersonal", outside himself, merely a "decorative landscape", unreal. He had "taken overmuch to heart that old commandment about seeking after the Kingdom of Heaven." But art must express life, not abstractions, not impossible longings: "We are only permitted to desire life . . ." he wrote in 1906. From about 1910 onwards Yeats' poetry starts coming to grips with the real world.

Following Boehme and Blake, Yeats perceives that life consists in opposition: no good without evil. Boehme had argued that nothing can be manifest, nothing can exist—not even God—without differentiation. To use his own language: God is both "love" and "wrath", both Yes and No; and the struggle of good and evil in the world is of God against Himself. For the world is the manifestation of God, not apart from him. Or in the language of Blake: God made both the lamb and the tiger. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake attacks the Christian division into Body and Soul, the doctrine "That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies." For life springs from the tension of opposites:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion,
Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human
existence.

So Yeats evolves his doctrine of "antinomies". Everywhere he saw

incompatible alternatives, which *together* make up the whole: flesh—spirit, art—life, power—wisdom, contemplation—action, violence—order, lonely intellect—sociable frivolity... No man can embrace both sides of an opposition at the same time: we can only grasp perfection intellectually as the union of the two. In fact, perfection is a sphere embracing the totality of possible existence—*not*, as Platonism taught, a realm outside existence. And if we choose to live we must choose to live by imperfection: every action, every thought, every feeling excludes its opposite. The spiritual life itself is partial, a state of imperfection. If, as Plotinus taught, the spirit yearns to leave the body, why did it ever enter the body? The purpose of life cannot be to die. Yeats would answer: the purpose of life is knowledge—experience itself is a value. And although this knowledge is finally beyond good and evil, it is also *of* good and evil, for to live is to be involved in good and evil.

Yeats conceives each individual to be an incarnate spirit. The spirit enters upon life in order to know itself. Without manifestation and self-consciousness, it could not exist. As Professor Stock says in her recent book on Yeats: "Life is the self-consciousness of reality, the means by which it knows itself." Altogether each spirit passes through twenty six incarnations, corresponding to the twenty eight phases of the moon less phases 1 and 15 (dark and full)—phases of perfection inaccessible to man. From phases 2 – 14 the domination of the will steadily increases; from 16 – 28 it is steadily defeated by the mind. The will seeks to realize its ideal self or "Mask", but is frustrated by external circumstances ("Body of Fate"), while the mind teaches acceptance of reality or external circumstances. By a permutation of these four in varying degrees of strength according to their movement round the lunar period—WILL—MASK—CREATIVE MIND—BODY OF FATE—all the possible kinds of personality and experience are covered. This is the "harsh geometry" of *A Vision*, here much simplified. The whole scheme is operated along the principle of antinomies: the phases of "beauty" are opposite those of "wisdom", the Self is pitted against the world, the mind against the will, the Mask or ideal self is the opposite of the actual incarnate self, and so forth. When Will is strongest, the personality is subjective and embodies beauty; when Creative Mind is strongest, the personality is objective and embodies wisdom—as of saints or scientists; the phases when Will and Mind are more or

less balanced in conflict are the phases of "temptation" (phases 5-11) and "violence" (phases 19-25)—producing poets and conquerors. The lunar period cuts the solar period (along the "summer" side of which the stages of the period between death and rebirth are symbolised) at right angles, thereby constituting the two planes of a sphere. Such a scheme enables Yeats to escape from the contradictions of romanticism, affirming both the values of life and the longing for perfection—the striving for union as the dynamism of the world. His poems achieve their own dynamic tension from these polarities. There is no return to God, salvation and the life-denying Middle Ages. Rather, life and death are part of the same continuing process. The spirit is indestructible, beyond birth, death, and salvation.

Things out of perfection sail
And all their swelling canvas wear,
Nor shall the self-begotten fail
Though fantastic men suppose
Building yard and stormy shore,
Winding sheet and swaddling clothes.

Now we may see how Yeats has conceived the problem of a man's divided personality in a divided world, the pull in opposite directions, for not only is he aware of the contrasts of personality between himself and other men, but he embodies these contrasts in himself through the doctrine of the Self and the Mask.* It is axiomatic for Yeats that the ideal self which the Mask pursues, is the opposite.

* In many respects Yeats' preoccupations recall Blake, of whom D. W. Harding has written: "Most of his writings reflect his struggle to establish order among apparently conflicting aspects of his own personality expressed as symbolic figures and situations." Blake's major theme is the Fall of Man, from Innocence to Experience, from unity of being to the disintegration of the psyche. The "eternal man" or Albion, who lived in the "eternal times" (childhood, Garden of Eden) enjoyed his four faculties (The Four Zoas) in harmony, balance. The faculties, geographically oriented, are: North, URTHONA or LOS (intuition, "prophecy", Apollo); South, URIZEN (thought, reason); West, THARMAS (sensation, body); East, LUVAH or Red ORC (love, feeling, Eros). Their original harmony was destroyed when instead of confining themselves to their respective spheres, they usurped each other's functions. Thus in the eighteenth century age of reason thought has usurped the function of intuition, in the negative morality of the Decalogue "prophecy" has usurped the function of feeling. This has led to repressions and inhibitions. In the prophetic books these conflicts are enacted in terms of cosmic drama. Blake's system is as complicated as Yeats', for the repressed functions give rise to "spectres" (male, cf. Jung: the Shadow) and "emanations" (female, cf. Jung: the Anima)—functions as inhibited by opposed faculties. e.g. Satan is the spectre of love inhibited by pro-

of the real self. The hunchback yearns to be Caesar, every saint conceals a lecher. Every man may expect to feel within himself an Octave yearning to be Coelio (Octave says Coelio represented "all that I loved on earth, all that I shall love"), or a Coelio yearning to be Octave. The sensitive romantics pursued the Mask of energy. (Both Stendhal and Goethe admired Napoleon.) The impetuous adolescent Goethe pursued the Mask of classical poise. In the case of Lorenzaccio the pure idealistic youth pursued the Mask of debauch—or the pleasure-loving Self pursued the Mask of youthful purity: for it is often difficult to tell which is Mask and which is Self. (The heroes of Stendhal—like all men—are similarly torn not only between different selves—real and ideal—but also between subjective illusion and objective submission, between power and wisdom, flesh and spirit, and all the other antinomies. Now the pursuit of Platonic absolutes is seen as but one variety of existence whose antinomy is the pursuit of wealth and pleasure; in its different incarnations the spirit will experience both. Yeats was always interpreting the lives of the people he knew according to his scheme, and the Autobiographies give many examples. W. H. Henley "half inarticulate . . . beset with personal quarrels, built up an image of power and magnanimity, till it became, at moments, when seen as it were by lightning, his true self." Oscar Wilde Yeats interprets as a parvenu, who "perpetually performed a play which was in all things the opposite of all that he had known in childhood and early youth." And William Morris: "a never idle man of great physical strength and extremely irascible," who "created new forms of melancholy and faint persons."

Yeats himself had many masks—both ideal and protective—presenting the varying antinomies of his personality. There is the shy timid schoolboy he describes in his Autobiographies: the early poetry seems to reflect this wistful sensitive personality. But elsewhere Yeats says that he "loves all proud and lonely things", because he is naturally sociable and ready to sell his soul in conversation. Then there is the bitter violent Yeats of the later poetry—Mask? or Self? Is he the blind hermit in the tower, the lover of Plotinus and ancient

phcey. As Yeats finds solar and lunar correspondences to symbolise the various kinds of personality and experience, so Blake establishes a kind of geography or map of the psyche with cities and continents (Beulah, Jerusalem, Albion, London, Edinburgh) where his battles are fought out. Ultimately he strives towards reconciliation of men and their faculties in the love of Christ. See W. P. Witcutt: *Blake: A Psychological Study* (London, 1946).

wisdom? Or is he the Wild Wicked Old Man, lover of Crazy Jane, admirer of legendary heroes? Is it his real self that yearns in *Sailing to Byzantium* to be gathered into "the artifice of eternity"? Or is his real self the Self of the *Dialogue of Self and Soul* which affirms: "I am content to live it all again/And yet again . . ." And is the Soul here the Mask telling him to "scorn the earth"? Was he an epicure whose Mask was Platonism? Should he have been a poet or a man of action?

I turn away and shut the door and on the stair
Wonder how many times I could have proved my worth
In something that all others understand or share . . .

And the conclusion:

But O! ambitious heart, had such a proof drawn forth
A company of friends, a conscience set at ease,
It had but made us pine the more.

For life is restless tension: there is no escape from the antinomies. The successful poet regrets the lost life of action, the victorious conqueror envies the sage. Was Yeats by nature a philosopher who, pursuing the Mask, forced himself to be a poet? "I was full of thought, often very abstract thought, longing to be full of images." And we know with what painful effort he wrote: "an intense unnatural labour that reduces composition to four or five lines a day". Did he imagine himself to be like the "bitter and violent men" of *Ancestral Houses* who longed for sweetness night and day? Did he create from the Mask or from the Self? The poetry covers a vast range of theme and feeling, reflecting the antinomies of his own nature: furious, gay, tender, sardonic, meditative, wild, enquiring, solemn, accepting, defiant . . . Like Baudelaire, Yeats claims "the right to contradict myself." Here death is the vanishing of "beautiful, lofty things", the loss of dear friends ("The innocent and the beautiful/Have no enemy but time"); there death is self-realisation, or does not exist: "Can the self-begotten fail?" Here he cherishes ceremony and innocence, there he acclaims the violence which destroys them. Clearly the doctrine of Self and Mask does not imply two separate consistent aspects of a man's personality, but must

rather be conceived as a process, a modifying growth, as Will and Mind struggle for mastery and each is influenced by Body of Fate.

Between extremeties
 Man runs his course;
 A brand, or flaming breath,
 Comes to destroy
 All those antinomies
 Of day and night;
 'The body calls it death,
 'The heart remorse.
 But if these be right
 What is joy?

Joy lies in accepting the antinomies—of oneself and the world. A religion of participation (Yeats said he was "very religious") has replaced a religion of detachment (Plotinus, Christianity). Yeats despairs of moral absolutes—nothing will make all men good: perfection is incompatible with existence. But in place of moral values, he asserts the value of life itself, and thereby takes up a significant trend of romantic thinking. As Blake had realised, the pursuit of perfection undermines life: Christian asceticism, puritanism ("And priests in black gowns were making their rounds,/And binding with briars my joys and desires"). Since all action involves us in good and evil, moral scruples inhibit action, especially when combined with doubt. This was "the sickness of the century", the disease of ambiguity sapping confidence. Romantic despair gnaws at the vital principle itself: "*L'Irréparable ronge...*" Werther says his heart is dead, the flame has flickered out, he is like a dried up well, an empty pail. Wilson Knight has analysed Hamlet as a man dedicated to death. Ennui and Spleen make life grey, cold, pale, sad. Baudelaire is prematurely aged ("young and yet very old"). The days limp by under heavy snow-filled skies, and "ennui, fruit of bleak incuriosity, assumes the proportions of immortality." How many of the romantics were half in love with easeful death! As the century proceeds, the sickness grows worse. The cult of strength and energy is abandoned. The long dejected syllables of Christina Rossetti:

O Earth lie heavily upon her eyes;
 Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth...

had into the *fin de siècle* with its "carefully caught regrets". Some one had to be found.

On one thing all the early romantics were agreed: spontaneous "natural" life is good. Even Werther loves the sunshine and children. All detest the bourgeois, the Church, formality, officialdom: all those devitalizing aspects of society. "Energy is eternal delight," said Blake. In the plays of Musset it is vitality which finally emerges as the one positive value above the ambiguities. There is no ambiguity in Musset's contempt for Marianne's going to Mass, or for the elderly husband with his bourgeois vanities and love of money. And if Octave is such an attractive figure, it is because he is witty, gay and lively. The values of life are asserted against caution, piety and prudishness: sunshine and flowers against schoolroom and convent. In *On ne Badine pas avec l'Amour*, love is shown as something that cannot be tamed, managed, calculated, made to fit in with arrangements. In spite of everything life is worth living, and love is most worth living for. Perdican puts this with romantic bravado:

All men are liars, false, fickle, talkative, hypocritical, conceited or cowardly, despicable and sensual; all women are perfidious, artificial, vain, inquisitive and depraved; the world is nothing but a bottomless sewer where slimy creatures crawl and twist on mountains of filth; but there is one thing sacred and sublime on earth, and that is the union of two of these creatures which are so hideous and imperfect.

It is to this aspect of romanticism that Yeats returns. Like Nietzsche he would admire Stendhal's heroes for their energy, and like Stendhal he hates all that is mean-spirited or mass-minded, the fingers in the greasy till, cautious public benefactors who demand "some sort of evidence". Church and bourgeois: for Yeats too they are the major aversions. In fact Yeats will accept any *full* expression of the personality—from the holiness of monks to porter-drinkers' randy laughter. One feels there is no room for mediocrity in his scheme of things; no phases of the moon which correspond to the great mass of ordinary people. Like Stendhal who "would rather spend a fortnight of each month in prison than have to do with shopkeepers," Yeats is aristocratic in taste and sympathies, a lover of the Big House and hard-riding country gentlemen.

In *Poetry and Tradition* (1907) Yeats had written that aristocracies

had made beautiful manners, the countrymen beautiful stories, and artists all other beautiful things "because Providence has filled them with recklessness." Beauty is incompatible with fear and caution. As Yeats grows older, his poetry seems more and more a vindication of this belief. He more and more abandons the meditative tone, the regretful enquiring persona, and seems to identify himself with the Wild Old Wicked Man who is "mad about women" and "mad about the hills".

Grant me an old man's frenzy,
Myself must I remake...

More and more he "desires only life." The later poetry abounds in assertions of vitality: Chambermaids' Songs, Crazy Jane scoring off the Bishop, Jack the Journeyman, Colonel Martin, and "Girls down on the seashore|Who understand the dark." Copulation even finds its way into the heaven of Plotinus! The style is mocking, aggressive, "bitter and violent," full of vulgarisms, careful rhyming and uneven rhythms—but magnificently under control. "Why should not old men be mad?" he demands, and in his own case, as in King Lear's, there is more matter than impertinency. He has achieved the mastery to throw off restraint:

When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest.

This exuberance is far from the emotional extravagance of *Sturm und Drang*. Yeats' art is ritualistic, enacting eternal patterns. He is seeking after the authentic tragic utterance. The last poems, for all their wildness of theme, have a curiously cold quality, static, distant. Like Goethe in the Roman Elegies, he has realized that the source of art is in vitality, but that art controls chaos. It is as if Yeats were rehearsing the themes of a private cult. "I always feel that my work is not Drama, but the ritual of a lost faith," he wrote to Sturge-Moore.

By his knowledge of the cycles of incarnation and of history, plus his conviction that the purpose of life is to experience it to the full

(all experience being partial), Yeats is able to assert the values of life and at the same time retain a perspective outside them. He is able to rage against old age, exult in strength and beauty, deplore the approaching disintegration of European civilisation ("the blood-dimmed tide is loosed"), delight in the company of friends, regret the past with tenderness, and at the same time perceive his own age as but a fraction of eternally repeated cycles, his own life as but one incarnation among many. It is this which enables him to contemplate the apocalyptic visions of *Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen*, *The Second Coming*, or *Meditations in Time of Civil War*. He foretells and accepts the ruin of his tower, the inevitable degeneration of family and culture—the owl building in the cracked masonry and crying desolation to the desolate sky. For Yeats there is no retreat into the arms of a loving father. Blessedness consists rather in those moments—the rush of action, the consummation of love—when we lose ourselves at the heart of the creative process. (Although he also knows the blessedness of detachment—*Vacillation IV*.) His image for this is the dance, and it gives him the triumphant close of *Among School Children*, where all the antinomies are united as indistinguishably as dancer and dance.

Yeats' final attitude is best described as tragic heroism. For nearly three centuries tragedy had been undermined by rational optimism or drowned in sentimental despair. Yeats reaffirms Elizabethan stoicism:

A great man in his pride
Confronting murderous men
Casts derision upon
Supersession of breath.

Richard Ellmann describes Yeats' final position as a state of uncertainty, but avoiding the chaos of doubt: an ethos of affirmation. As Yeats told Monk Gibbon at the end of his life, it is not conduct that matters: "Nothing matters except the heroic mind." It is the essence of the tragic mood that it centres all values on man, unconcerned with any sphere beyond man. We find this assertion everywhere in the later poetry:

I mock Plotinus' thought
And cry in Plato's teeth,

Death and life were not
 Till man made up the whole,
 Made lock, stock and barrel
 Out of his bitter soul,
 Aye, sun and moon and star, all...

Or again:

Whatever flares upon the night
 Man's own resinous heart has fed.

Man must learn to face himself and his condition without flinching ("the heroic discipline of the looking glass"). Contrast Baudelaire: "O God, give me the courage and the strength to contemplate my body without disgust." For to live is to accept change and imperfection—even to exult in them. This brings Yeats very close to Nietzsche's *amor fati*, tragic joy. It is the theme of the first two of the Last Poems: we must delight in the world spectacle for its own sake. The gyres of history run their immutable courses, everything is process, nothing can be fixed and held: "For beauty dies of beauty, worth of worth." Our civilisation may go up in flames ("Aeroplane and Zeppelin will come out..."), many ingenious lovely things vanish as completely as Phidias' golden ivories, but nothing is gained by sighing for the past or lamenting the present:

What matter though numb nightmare ride on top,
 And blood and mire the sensitive body stain?
 What matter? Heave no sigh, let no tear drop,
 A greater, a more gracious time has gone;
 For painted forms or boxes of make-up
 In ancient tombs I sighed, but not again;
 What matter? Out of cavern comes a voice,
 And all it knows is that one word 'Rejoice!'

[Goethe had said that *Weltschmerz* or "disgust with life" (*Ekel vor dem Leben*) arose from the inability to accept and participate in recurrence, and he had quoted the case of an Englishman who hanged himself because he could not bear the thought of dressing and undressing every day for the rest of his life. And Werther envied the peasant woman "who pursues the narrow circle of her existence in happy composure, lives from one day to the next, and when she

when the leaves fall, thinks only that winter is coming." Goethe had written: "All enjoyment of life is founded in the regular return of outward things." Yeats extends this to the contemplation of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence:

Conduct and work grow coarse, and coarse the soul,
What matters! Those that Rocky Face holds dear,
Lovers of heroes and of women, shall,
From marble of a broken sepulchre,
Or dark beneath the polecat and the owl,
Or any rich dark nothing disinter
The workman, noble and saint, and all things run
On that unchangeable gyre again.

As early as 1907 Yeats had written of tragedy: "It has not joy, as we understand the word, but ecstasy, which is from the contemplation of things vaster than the individual and imperfectly seen, perhaps, by all those that still live." In *Lapis Lazuli* he asserts that Hamlet and Lear are gay, because they enact eternal patterns (art triumphs over event):

Gaiety transforming all that dread.
All men have aimed at, found and lost;
Black night; Heaven blazing into the head:
Tragedy wrought to the uttermost.

And so to the conclusion:

All things fall and are built again,
And those that build them again are gay.

Creation and destruction—the antinomies of life—and both take place in joy. In his essay *The Tree of Life* (1906) Yeats speaks of "what sweetness what rhythmic movement there is in those that have become the joy that is themselves." And in *Poetry and Tradition*: "... that we may be free from all the rest, sullen anger, solemn virtue, calculating anxiety, gloomy suspicion, prevaricating hope, we should be reborn in gaiety." Here then is the final defeat of romantic despair: joy transfigures ambiguities. Man himself is the absolute: the self-begotten cannot fail. The soul sits in judgment on itself:

I am content to follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought;
Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!

A poet's philosophy no doubt—or Mask. For all true poets are of
the Devil's party—and most of them know it.

FIVE POEMS IN SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

NARESH GUHA

No other supreme poet or painter ever had to wait so long for proper recognition as William Blake. Born 13 years before Wordsworth, 15 years before Coleridge, he had anticipated them by many years in his spirited rebellion against the formalism of the eighteenth century, and yet he was hardly recognised by the apostles of the Romantic movement. He offended many by his heretical views, and puzzled others by his symbolism. More than thirty years had passed after his death before a Rossetti or a Swinburne did appreciate his full genius. The cultivated public took much longer to recognise his stature though every schoolboy has read with pleasure his magnificent yet ambiguous tiger-poem. And a suggestion to give him a fitting memorial in St. Paul's Cathedral came only in the late twenties of this century.

None would deny the fact that Blake is obscure in his Prophetic Books, so obscure indeed that even with the help of annotations and detailed discussions of these enigmatic books by writers like S. Foster Damon, Northrop Frye, Pierre Berger, Wicksteed, David Erdman and many others they still remain a tangled jungle where even a tolerably cultivated reader often loses his track. It is doubtful if Blake, as Foster Damon suggests, ever deliberately 'destroyed surface meaning of his later works hoping to force open the interior eyes of his audience.'¹ Symbolism is not really a 'method of concealing . . . ideas', as he says. (It is not a conscious method that a poet can apply or withhold as he likes. It is on the other hand an inevitable means of expression for some of the poets who conceive only in symbols. It was the nature of Blake's genius that he conceived in symbols and created myths which qualities are well known today in the works of W. B. Yeats and James Joyce.) Whether he deliberately concealed his meaning or not is not important here to consider, but it is true he remained mainly unappreciated in his time because of this obscurity in his writings. Many people believed that he was mad, and in an article published in *Revue Britannique* for 1833 it was alleged that Blake was an inmate for some time of Bethlem Hospital in London, an asylum for the mentally sick. This charge has been

discredited,² but here are some of the interesting impressions about him among his contemporaries, which will show that though some of them admitted he had genius, most of them were inclined to qualify that term in a damaging way:

Thomas Dibdin, who met him in 1816, writes in his *Reminiscences of A Literary Life*:

"This extraordinary man sometimes—but in good sooth very rarely—reached the sublime; but the sublime and the grotesque seemed, somehow or other, to be forever amalgamated in his imagination; and the choice or result was necessarily doubtful."³

Crabb Robinson, a friend of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Lamb, wrote in an article even before he had met Blake:

"Of all the conditions which arouse the interest of the psychologist, none assuredly is more attractive than the union of genius and madness in single remarkable minds, which, while on the one hand they compel our admiration by their great mental powers, yet on the other move our pity by their claims to supernatural gifts. Of such is the whole race of ecstasies, mystics, seers of vision, and dreamers of dreams, and to their list we have now to add another name, that of William Blake."⁴

As for *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Robinson does not seem to have unalloyed praise:

"These miniature pictures are of the most vivid colours, and often grotesque, so that the book presents a most singular appearance. It is not easy to form a comprehensive opinion of the text, since the poems deserve the highest praise and the gravest censure."⁵

Wordsworth who considered Blake as having elements of poetry a thousand times more than either Byron or Scott, is reported to have said after he had read the *Songs*: "There is no doubt this poor man was mad."⁶ And though Hazlitt thought them 'beautiful, and only too deep for the vulgar', he added afterwards: "He is ruined by vain struggles to get rid of what presses on his brain; he attempts impossibilities."⁷

Mona Wilson, the celebrated biographer of Blake, thus sums up the situation: "It would seem then that Blake's literary contemporaries found his poems strange, disturbing, beautiful, and the

readiest solution of their own perplexity was to call him a genius but insane."⁸ It is amazing to see how this charge of a streak of insanity in Blake is still being repeated in this century even after Freud and Jung, after we have learnt so much about the process of mythmaking by our subconscious mind, a legitimate act of the human genius. Clutton-Brock, for example, in his book on Blake,⁹ after dismissing the valuable contribution of Foster Damon toward the understanding of Blake's symbolism as having 'a faint flavour of Christian Science'¹⁰ can have the temerity of insisting that Blake had a 'schizophrenic' mind and 'as time went on Blake lived increasingly under the domination of his fantasies, and was less and less able to check them by comparison with reality.' This is like accusing Einstein of not having checked his mathematical theories by comparison with popular newspaper reports.

We are justified in thinking, as will be shown shortly, that the reason behind this consistent refusal among some people to appreciate Blake is their levelheaded suspicion of mysticism, of anything that cannot be rationally proved and understood, and their genuine distress at some of the ideas in Blake. The term 'mysticism' is perhaps an unfortunate use in connection with Blake. As a matter of fact, Northrop Frye has challenged this terminology, and suggested that it would be more correct and consistent to call him a visionary instead, not only because Blake himself used that term constantly in his writings, but because "mysticism is a form of spiritual communion with God which is by its nature incommunicable to any one else, and which soars beyond faith into direct apprehension. To the poet the mystical experience is poetic material, not poetic form. . . . A visionary creates, or dwells in, a higher spiritual world in which the objects of perception in this one have become transfigured and charged with a new intensity of symbolism. This is quite consistent with art, because it never relinquishes the visualization which no artist can do without."¹¹

In any case, Blake came to maintain ideas which are hardly, if at all, supported by conventional Christianity. P. Berger has summarised these ideas as following:

"in his conception of the world, the negation of the evidence of the senses and of reason; the reality of the invisible world perceived by the imagination; and the correspondence between the visible

and the invisible, one being only a symbol of the other;—in his cosmogony, the primal unity of the whole universe with God, a unity to which it will return at the end of time; the identity of God, man and nature; the process of creation by successive separations which produced individualities; and the process of regeneration by the sacrifice of these individualities, and the return to the primal unity;—in psychology, the theory of 'states' through which the soul passes without changing its essence; and the resulting conception of the Zoas and their struggles;—in religion, his attacks against the tyranny of the law and of Jehovah; his idea of devils as desires in revolt against this law and destined in the end to overcome it, and of Christ as the destroyer of the law, the divine humanity, the poetic imagination, and the liberator, but not the redeemer;—finally, in morals, the lawfulness of desires as opposed to law, and, conversely, the necessity of sacrificing our desires through love of others."¹²

Most people are perplexed by some of these ideas which are heretical. To understand the genuineness of this shock in the mind of many we may go back to an important though curious item of Blake criticism in the early nineteenth century. The writer in question is not only a great poet himself but one of the greatest critical minds that ever lived.

Charles Augustus Tulk,¹³ an eminent Swedenborgian, who was mainly instrumental in establishing the 'New Church' in Great Britain among whose earliest members were Blake and his wife, gave a copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* to Coleridge in 1818 and asked for his views. Coleridge's letter in this connection has been taken by many as a critical utterance which perhaps it is not. The copy he used was the same from which the 1839 edition of the *Songs* was published by Wilkinson.¹⁴ Coleridge begins his letter¹⁵ (dated Highgate, Thursday evening, 1818) with a criticism of the 'repulsive faults' he noticed in the title-page drawings, though he concedes that 'only a master learned in his art' could produce the figure of the second leaf. Then he lists the poems in groups to indicate his preference and sometimes adds short comments on them. Of the 37 poems listed, only three poems, he tells Tulk, gave him pleasure 'in the highest degree'. These are: 'The Divine Image', 'The Little Black Boy' (which he liked most of them all), and 'Night'. The 18 poems that gave him just 'great pleasure' include 'The Little Girl Lost' and 'The Little Girl Found', 'Introduction' (*Songs of*

Experience), 'Earth's Answer', and 'The Tyger' are listed among 8 poems that gave him 'still greater pleasure', while 'greater still pleasure' was afforded by 'Holy Thursday', 'The School Boy', and 'Infant Joy', though he suggested interesting changes in the last poem for 'a babe two days old does not, cannot smile, and innocence and the very truth of nature must go together. Infancy is too holy a thing to be ornamented.'

This is a very strange letter from a man of Coleridge's stature. He does not seem to have been impressed at all by the two *Lyca* poems as he awarded them the lowest marks among those that gave him any pleasure at all. And 'The Tyger' gets only a little higher praise though without any comment whatever. Is this a critical comment? B. R. McElderry convincingly argues¹⁶ that 'purely literary considerations' do not influence Coleridge's judgement, and that the annotations are from a doctrinal point of view. His reasons: (1) Coleridge's ranking is at variance with the usual judgement, (2) he liked those poems better that present ideas in keeping with traditional Christian doctrine, and (3) he gave no attention to the interpretation of Blake's symbolism. It is significant to notice that the poems that gave him particularly no pleasure at all are 'A poison Tree' and 'To Tirzah'—the one tells how the repression of wrath, ordinarily considered a Christian virtue, causes wrath to grow until its fruits kill the enemy; the other represents salvation through Christ as 'cancelling the love for the speaker's mother'.

In this paper I intend to discuss five poems from *Songs of Experience* to show that not only the Prophetic Books but these seemingly easy poems also raise questions of dense obscurity. The poems are: 1. 'The Tyger', 2. 'The Little Girl Lost', 3. 'The Little Girl Found', 4. 'Introduction' (*Songs of Experience*), and 5. 'Earth's Answer'. Being magnificent lyric utterances they sometimes lull many readers who therefore cherish them in a vague enchanted way, and forget to ask any relevant questions. Some of them moreover petulantly contends: "The two books together are the most important collection of Blake's most perfect and intelligible poems. Indeed, it has required the labours of many critics to show how unintelligible some of them are."¹⁷

It was Coleridge who observed to this effect that poetry gives most pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood. Perhaps that is 'generally' true for lyric poetry. But it would be

difficult to concur with this observation if we think about the kind of poetry in question where there is an undisguised context of a private or more or less uncommon mythology. The contention of this paper is that Blake while writing, if not the poems of *Songs of Innocence* (1789), definitely those of the *Songs of Experience* (1794), had already evolved a mythology of his own, the elements of which were gathered from various unconventional writers of the past; and secondly, that many of these poems, particularly the five poems selected for discussion in this paper, act as a prologue to the later more intricate books of Prophecy. All his writings from this time onwards have that elaborated mythology as their context. With the passing of years he only elaborated his intricate design, but the general outline remained the same to the end, right up to *Jerusalem*, his last Prophetic Book.

The Lyca poems are perhaps the earliest written in this vein. Kathleen Raine¹⁸ argues this to be likely, first because these two poems, so obviously belonging to the Experience group, were at first included in the early copies of *Songs of Innocence*, but by 1793 they were transferred to the *Songs of Experience*,¹⁹ and secondly because the first two poems of the next half of the book are clearly expanded from the eight introductory lines of 'The Little Girl Lost'. Geoffrey Keynes has decided to retain these poems in the first half of the combined book in his definitive edition for the simple reason that in 7 of the last 8 copies Blake used this arrangement.²⁰ This does not seem to be justifiable at all.

I have said that for a clear appreciation of these five poems, it is necessary, at least helpful, to know (Blake's world of myth that he had created, because the words henceforth are loaded with private meaning, and if one neglects this one is likely to misunderstand the poems. Here, for example, are a few questions that demand satisfaction if we do not want to share the views of Blake's contemporaries. What is meant by 'forests of the night'? (Forests at night? Forests completely engulfed by night?) Is 'dread' a right epithet for the benevolent loving God, the creator of the Lamb? What do the stars do in that poem, and why do they 'throw down their spears' and 'water heaven with their tears' when the creation of the Tyger is complete?) Or should we think, at this point of his poetic career, Blake really begins to show the signs of disintegration of his poetic power?²¹ What, in the first of the Lyca poems, is the relation between

last eight lines with the rest of the poem? Who is the girl? And why is she so anxious to be away from her mother? Why does she 'go to sleep' (Only because she is tired?) And what kind of sleep is this that we see her sleeping all the time ever since she is carried into the cave? The poem begins with the 'prophecy' that the earth

Shall arise and seek
For her mother meek;
And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

But the sleeper in the poem is not the earth but Lyca. Is she then the symbol of the earth? And yet she does not arise and the miracle in the desert, promised at the beginning of the poem, does not occur. Why? Or, are these really poems about an ordinary lost child? In that case, which is that country where lions and leopards and tigers are so gentle, considerate, romantic and communicative? Lascadio Hearn thought the poems were "certainly inspired by the curious belief of the middle ages that the tigers and other wild beasts could not harm a virgin, and the deeper meaning of the poem is the strength of innocence in its charm."²² Or perhaps, the other 'deeper meaning' suggested by Marc Schorer is right after all: "Against the social scene," he is referring to the social injustices, "external nature . . . is relatively serene. The 'beasts of prey'—lion, leopards, tigers—show a kindness to the lost little girl that the citizens of London are unable to show to one another. When her parents found her . . . they chose as a home the wilderness, which seems more peaceful."²³ And why the lion of the 'deep cavern' again and again is said to have golden hair, and how is it that the golden lion suddenly turns into a 'spirit arm'd in gold' having 'on his head a crown'? In the poem called 'Introduction' the Earth is invoked to 'arise from out the dewy grass' because it is morning. But what should we make of the last three lines—

The starry floor
The wat'ry shore
Is given thee till the break of day.

Do they really vanish when the morning breaks?

Foster Damon has made a great contribution to the Blake study

by pointing out so many details of the symbolic meaning hidden in the texture of the poems. "Blake's thought," he says, "was of the clearest and deepest; his poetry of the subtlest and strongest; his painting of the highest and most luminous. He tried to solve problems which concern us all, and his answer to them are such as to place him among the greatest thinkers of several centuries."²⁴ To claim that a poet is a *thinker* and that he tries to solve our problems is rather putting the cart before the horse. Foster Damon tries to prove that Blake had the revelations of a true mystic, and he actually passed through all the five stages of the Mystical Way outlined by Miss Evelyn Underhill in her *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*. If Blake were a mystic of this nature and his complete work 'an accurate record of his life'²⁵ then why is he so much interested in political revolutions of his time rather than in the mystical communion with the ineffable? (Foster Damon explains²⁶ what Blake meant by 'experience', one of the contrary states of human soul, that innocence, Heaven though it be, is not perfect. The child contains seeds of error which must grow until they can be weeded out. 'To be in Error and to be cast out is part of God's design', Blake writes in *Last Judgment*. Innocence is not a means of Salvation. "The fool shall not enter into heaven, let him be ever so holy." (*Last Judgment*)). So Blake is really concerned in the *Songs of Experience* with the problem of evil, in the scheme of the universe. If one summarises themes of his whole work it ultimately boils down to this: the problem of evil, the Fall of mankind, and means of Resurrection. All his Prophetic Books are the variations on this single theme. Foster Damon unerringly points this out in his notes on the poem,²⁷ finds out parallel lines from Blake's later works ('The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man'; 'The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God', 'The Tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction'—all from *Proverb of Hell*.), but concludes that Blake *was not sure* at the time of writing 'The Tyger' how to reconcile the Forgiveness of Sins (the Lamb) and the Punishment of Sins (the Tyger)—and he keeps it an open question.) Kathleen Raine on the other hand has shown²⁸ how this conclusion is widely out of the mark. The whole point of the poem is in the two disturbing final questions:

Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Or to put it more prosaically,—who made the Tyger? If it is the creator of the Lamb who has made the 'Tyger' we remain perplexed about the moral character of that God, because Lamb's creator is the all-wise all-loving 'good' God of Christianity. Kathleen Raine suggests that Blake by that time had already accepted the views held by the Gnostics who believed that the creator of the world is a demigurge, identified by the Cabbalists with the God of the Old Testament. This can be shown most convincingly from Blake's own work. Crabb Robinson wrote in his diary that Blake told him:

"Whoever believes in Nature says B. disbelieves in God—for Nature is the work of the Devil."²⁹

In *Jerusalem* he writes, 'in the chaotic state of sleep' into which Albion, the Universal Man, is fallen, 'Satan and Adam and the whole world was created by Elohim.' Denis Saurat, as Kathleen Raine points out, thinks that Blake's source of Gnostic creed is Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History* published in English translation in the year 1765, and Blake became interested about the Gnostics perhaps from another book having genuine Gnostic text: *The Divine Pymander*. Attributed to Hermes himself, this book was widely read during the eighteenth century among Platonists and esotericists, and among the Platonists known to Blake was that interesting neo-Platonist-writer Thomas Taylor whose influence on Blake will be discussed shortly. That the similarity of views is not coincidental is shown by the following lines taken from *The Divine Pymander* quoted by Kathleen Raine where verbal echoes are evident:

"Consider, O son, how man is made and framed in the womb. . . . Who circumscribed and marked out his eyes? Who bored his nostrils and ears? Who opened his mouth, who stretched out and tied together his sinews? Who channelled the veins? Who hardened and made strong the bones? Who clothed the flesh with skin? Who divided the fingers and the Joynts? Who flattened and made broad the soles of the feet? Who digged the pores? . . ."

If this had been the passage from the Gnostic text that inspired Blake's 'The Tyger', which seems to be very probable, then the

answer meant to the last question in the poem 'Did he who made the Lamb make thee?' is obviously 'NO'. Marc Schorer is nearly right when he says:

"Who will restore lost pastoral delights, bring back the lamb? The answer is the 'Tyger' . . . The Lamb and Tyger's juxtaposition points to the resolution of the paradox they present. The innocent impulses of the lamb have been curbed by restraints, and the lamb has turned into a tiger. Innocence is converted into experience."³⁰

But he adds, energy can be curbed but cannot be destroyed, and when it reaches the limits of its endurance it bursts forth into revolutionary wrath. This may seem to be reading too much in the poem, but such were indeed the views of Blake. Kathleen Raine points out that the demiurge of the Gnostics is not the supreme God, but neither is he in any way like the Christian devil. His creation is, in some sense, by the permission of the Eternal, and, according to Hermes, his work of creation accomplished, he at last returns from where he emanated. Blake incorporates this idea in his version of the justification of the ways of God, the creator of the Lamb.

The 'forests of the night' are 'the endlessly multiplied vegetation of the mortal life',³¹ or are the symbols in Blake of the growth of error, as Foster Damon points out. In this forest of life the path is hidden by many theories, and the sun is obscured. 'Blake uses forest,' Foster Damon explains, 'as the world of experience where the many sterile errors (dead trees) conceal the path and dim the light. . . It occurs on the title-page of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in the margin to the 9th illustration of *Job* and many other places.'³² The stars in Blake do not represent eternity as is usual. They represent an inferior order of the created world which is ruled by reason or Urizen who is the cause of the Fall. Kathleen Raine thinks the reference to the stars and their part in the poem can be better understood in the light of some Cabbalistic writings, in this case Thomas Vaughan's *Lumen de Lumine* or Robert Fludd's *Mosaical Philosophy*, both books well-known to Blake. The Cabbalists believed that Elohim, the lesser god, the creator of the natural world, operates his will upon earth by way of the stars; and Kathleen Raine has identified the likely passages in the Gnostic writing known to Blake one of them being:

"The beams and brightness of the externall influence do descend, first, to the starry region of the temporal world, and afterwards are showered down in the elementary spheres, and penetrates even into the bowels of the earth, and the dark abyss, to operate the will of that radicall essence which sent them forth."³³

The stars, therefore, had to help in the creation of this grand evil by the order of the creator of the natural world and they were sad because they knew how potent this evil power was.

In *The Explicator* a few years ago (Dec. '42, Feb. '43, and June '44) a few attempts were made to explain the obscurity in this reference to the stars with no helpful results whatever. *Notes & Queries* (Nov. 17, '45) published a letter from T. O. Mabbott where the writer suggested an explication that is not very different from the one noted above though the writer did not use any Gnostic text for his elucidation. He says:

"Traditionally, arrows or spears are symbols of the plague or evil. Traditionally also the stars bring on both plague and rain (tears) . . . When the stars threw down their spears they brought destruction, and also they regretted it and brought down their tears; when the Tyger was created terrible destruction was let loose, the stars were sad." p. 212

Of all the explications by Foster Damon those on the two Lyca poems seem to be least satisfactory. (He thinks that these two poems ('The Little Girl Lost' and 'The Little Girl Found') 'teach' that Death is a release into the better world of Eternity. This is complete misrepresentation of Blake's views. Blake never thinks about death as the solution of the enigma of evil. He was concerned about Resurrection, of the regeneration of mankind, and this is exactly what is suggested by the 8 introductory lines to the first poem,) about which Foster Damon remains silent:

In futurity
I prophetic see
That the earth from sleep
(Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise and seek
For her maker meek;

And the desert wild
Become a garden mild.

(It should be noticed that Lyca is lost in 'the desert wild', and from there is taken into 'caverns deep' by the kingly lion. There in the cave she sleeps to this day. The cave is also the 'palace deep' of the 'spirit arm'd in gold' who, however, is the lion. Lyca 'had wandered long/Hearing wild bird's song.' She wants to sleep 'underneath the tree', and invokes 'Frowning, frowning night' to let her moon arise. Foster Damon is right when he says 'Lyca wanders somehow into the sleep of Experience—a desert.'³⁴ But where did he find in Blake that Lion as a symbol is the 'protector of the Lamb, and also the Angel of Death', nobody knows. The descending into the cave where the beasts play around her sleeping form, and where things are golden—remains unexplained.) Here also Kathleen Raine's suggestion seems to be more convincing and consistent.³⁵ She thinks that Blake was using neo-Platonic ideas about generation and their interpretation of the well-known Greek myth, that of the descent of Persephone into Hades. Blake knew Porphyry, the neo-Platonist, very early in his poetic life,³⁶ and a beautiful tempera painting by Blake has been discovered in 1949 where is shown a pictorial statement of the metaphysical theme developed by Porphyry in his *Cave of the Nymphs*. Miss Raine also thinks that Blake had another book in mind while developing his myth—Thomas Taylor's *Dissertation upon the Mysteries of Eleusis and Dionysus* where the theme of Eleusis is the descent of the soul from eternity into the temporal world, and its return to its native country. There is a significant difference between Porphyry's view and that put forward by Taylor. In Porphyry incarnation (Blake's Experience) is a pure evil, whereas in Taylor it is a necessary part of the Divine Plan, which is also Blake's position.

The story of Eleusis is this: Persephone, who is a goddess of vegetation, and whose return heralds the spring, descends into Hades. Her mother Ceres searches for her all over the world and ultimately finds her in Hades. Taylor interprets this myth, by following later Platonists, as the soul's descent into generation. Miss Raine observes:

"Lyca is in some sense the individual soul descending into generation, and also, at the same time, the soul of the world. Her story is of a wandering and a return, a sleep and an awakening; for

to the Platonists thought, and Blake believed, is the story of man's resurrection."³⁷

The tree as usual in Blake, signifies the natural universe, 'the vegetable condition of generation'. It is interesting to notice that Lyca, though lost, does not show any anxiousness to be found by her mother, and she is carried into the 'caves'—Plato's and Porphyry's cave of the world; and she does not die and so attain immortality as Foster Damon suggests. (There in the nocturnal underworld animal forms play about the sleeping Lyca. (The mother, Ceres in the myth, explains Taylor's intellect in the Platonic sense, the pure reason—the self-introspecting part of our nature'.³⁸ So she does not want soul's lapse into sleep or death—a descent into generation.) Miss Raine suggests that (Blake was using the views of the Alchemists, of Agrippa and Paracelsus whom he passionately admired, in depicting gold in the underworld.) 'What is above is below', Alchemists believe. Blake uses this idea as his answer to the neo-Platonists with their mistrust of matter. (Experience, according to Blake, is a part of the Divine Will, and without experience no fool, however holy, may enter Blake's Heaven. 'The King of Hades is after all golden, divine. It is this revelation to the parents of Lyca that is the central meaning of the poem.³⁹)

It is easy now to read the first two poems of the *Songs of Experience* in this light. After Kathleen Raine has pointed out, it is no longer possible to ignore the obvious relation of the Lyca poems to these others. (It is as if Blake takes up the theme of Lyca's sleep from where he left it in those earlier poems. Also there in the introductory lines to 'The Little Girl Lost' the poet makes a prophecy: 'The earth from sleep/. . . Shall arise and seek/For her maker meek'. This regeneration, the poet tells now, can be effected by the Voice—the voice of Jesus, of Imagination, of Divine Humanity. The Jealous God of the Old Testament, 'Starry Jealousy' of 'Earth's Answer', the framer of the laws of Ten Commandments, the laws of this world, keeps the Earth a prisoner and keeps her den. Foster Damon observes that the earth, invoked by the Bard, is the symbol of Fallen Man, the Voice is identified with Jesus and the Spirit of Poetry. The stars whose pole could have been controlled if there had been no Fall are 'the symbols of Reason because of their scattered, ineffectual sparks of light and because of their mechanistic motion. Blake believed that

man had fallen because he allowed Reason to control him, instead of controlling reason and subordinating it to the higher power of Imagination, who is God."⁴¹) The *morn* is the renewal of true light, the *starry floor*—Reason, roofing Man in from Eternity, and *watery shore* is of the dead sea of Time and Space. Kathleen Raine points out, however, that while writing these two poems Blake had in mind Plotinus. Thomas Taylor's *Five Books of Plotinus* appeared in 1794 about the time when these poems were being engraved, and there is nothing to doubt that Blake read them at once. The following lines from Plotinus appear in Taylor's book being taken from Plotinus's *On the Nature and Origin of Evil*:

"Soul's descent into a world of matter is the only source of evil. Her true country is the world of divine light. Falling into matter, she falls into *darkness*, and into the *watery element*, and there she must wait in captivity for *the break of day* that will restore her to her native place."⁴²

The verbal echoes are evident. Particularly important to notice here is the symbolic use of water. Matter, as Kathleen Raine points out, is symbolised by Plotinus as *water* or occasionally *mire*. With this information in mind the lines

The starry floor,
The watery shore,
Is given thee till the break of day.

can be easily understood.

In 'Earth's Answer' can be seen the embryonic forms of Blake's mythical character Urizen. Dorothy Plowman observed⁴³ that Urizen is not derived really from a play of the words 'your reason' (cf. Foster Damon). It is derived from a Greek word 'meaning to bound, to limit, with the cognate form Uranus, signifying the lord of the Firmament'. And the 'selfish father of men/Gruel, jealous, selfish fear', the 'starry Jealousy' who keeps the earth bound is the first suggestion of Blake's Urizen whom he calls 'Prince of the starry wheels'. He is 'the ruler of destiny. He revolves the zodiac of the fixed stars and the seven circles of the planets like a wheel whose centre is the starry pole.'⁴⁴

The two poems together come then to mean that the soul of the

could have fallen aleep, held captive like Persephone in Hades. She would be rescued from her sleep and that resurrection, the poet says, is possible only if she hears the 'Voice of the Bard':

'Who Present, Past & Future sees;
Whose ears have heard
The holy word
That walked among the ancient trees.

Herein I sketch the whole outline of the myth created by Blake and meditated in the Prophetic Books—concerning the Fall, the causes of the Fall, the problem of evil (Experience) and the path of Resurrection. The poems discussed here are indeed the prologues to the total body of Blake's work.

¹S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, (Boston and New York, 1947), p. 65. (Hereafter referred to as 'Damon')

²Mona Wilson, *The Life of William Blake*, (Peter Davies Limited, 1932), p. 239. (Hereafter referred to as 'Wilson')

³Wilson, p. 236

⁴Wilson, p. 286

⁵Wilson, p. 287

⁶Wilson, p. 288

⁷Wilson, p. 295

⁸Wilson, p. 295

⁹Allan Clutton-Brock, *Blake*, (Duckworth, 1933), p. 65. (Hereafter referred to as 'Brock')

¹⁰Brock, p. 56

¹¹Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, 1947. (Hereafter referred to as 'Frye') p. 78

¹²P. Berger, *William Blake: Poet and Mystic*, Trans. Daniel H. Conner, (Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1914), p. 198

¹³(Charles Augustus Tulk: Swedenborgian, eldest son of John Tulk—an original member of the 'Theosophical Society' formed (1783) for the study of Swedenborg's writings. He never joined the 'new church' or had any connection with its 'conference'. In social matters he early took part in efforts for bettering the condition of factory hands, aiding the movement by newspaper articles. He was intimate with Coleridge. He devoted much time to the elaboration of a rational system, which he found below the surface of Swedenborg's writings, as their underlying religious philosophy. (Dictionary of National Biography Vol. IV)

¹⁴Godfrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of William Blake*, (New York 1921), p. 121-22

¹⁵*The Letters of S. T. Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Raine. (The Grey Walls Press, 1940), p. 331

¹⁶*Modern Language Quarterly*, 1948, p. 298

¹⁷Brock, p. 41

- ¹⁶ *The Divine Vision*, ed. V. de Sola Pinto, (Victor Gollancz, 1957), p. 22. (Hereafter referred to as 'Vision')
- ¹⁷ Geoffrey Keynes, *The Writings of William Blake*, (Nonesuch Press, 1925), p. 354. (Hereafter 'Keynes')
- ¹⁸ Keynes, p. 361
- ¹⁹ (a) Damon, p. 276: "Charles Cestre found madness beginning here. 'Blake a perdu sa sérénité. A partir de ce moment, son esprit se trouble. Il ne conserve assez de lucidité pour concevoir un plan de poème intelligible,'" (b) Damon, p. 276: "Percy Cross Standing (The Catholic World, July 1905) in an article entitled 'Was Blake a poet?' called this poem 'Arrant drivel'."
- ²⁰ Lafcadio Hearn, *Interpretations of Literature*, Vol. I, p. 59-60. (Quoted in Damon, p. 279)
- ²¹ Marc Schorer, *William Blake: The Politics of Vision*, (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1946), p. 249. (Hereafter 'Schorer')
- ²² Damon, Introduction
- ²³ Damon, p. 2
- ²⁴ Damon, p. 40
- ²⁵ Damon, p. 276
- ²⁶ Kathleen Raine, 'Who Made the Tyger', *Encounter*, June 1954. (Hereafter 'Encounter')
- ²⁷ *Encounter*, (quoted in Miss Raine's article)
- ²⁸ Schorer, p. 250
- ²⁹ *Encounter*
- ³⁰ Damon, p. 279
- ³¹ *Encounter*, p. 50
- ³² Damon, p. 279
- ³³ *Vision*, p. 19
- ³⁴ From Thomas Taylor's translation of Proclus' *Mathematical Commentaries*, Vol. II, published in 1788. In *Theol* (1789) he used Porphyry's theme of the descent of the feminine soul into generation. (See *Vision*, p. 19)
- ³⁵ *Vision*, p. 27-28
- ³⁶ *Vision*, p. 30
- ³⁷ *Vision*, p. 45
- ³⁸ *Vision*, p. 50
- ³⁹ Damon, p. 57-58
- ⁴⁰ *Vision*, p. 51 (italics mine)
- ⁴¹ *Vision*, p. 57 (footnote)
- ⁴² *Vision*, p. 57-58

GOETHE'S STRASSBURG LYRICS

WERNER REHFELD

Goethe's Strassburg lyrics are mainly seen in connection with the early "Sturm and Drang" (Storm and Stress period). Next to the poems of Schiller's youth, the only remaining legacy of the Storm and Stress are the poems which came so successfully to the young Goethe in Strassburg. "Sah ein Knab ein Röslein stehn" ("When a boy saw a tiny rose"), which later became a folk-song, as well as the well-known *Wilkommen und Abschied* (Welcome and Farewell), both originated in Strassburg. The latter will best be remembered as a subject for an essay at school.

Goethe set his own style in Strassburg. He had become acquainted with the ideas of rationalism during his previous short stay in Leipzig. Important though the theories and definitions were, as taught in Leipzig at that time by the literary Pope, Johann Christoph Gottsched, it was very little for Goethe to begin with. He could not bring poetry and life into harmony with the ideas of rationalism. All his life Goethe searched for harmony between composition and action and for the first time he attained this in the poems of his Strassburg period.

It remains to the credit of rationalism that for the first time the laws of pattern and form were studied: any arbitrary act and all subjective considerations were to be dismissed in the future. Systematists or at all times threatened with one danger: that they will perfect their system and not make enough allowances for the spontaneity and originality of the individual. The system, which should originally have eliminated a confused situation, develops into a mechanical functioning independently, but is endangered when irrational impulses interrupt lawful evolution.

Goethe was not spared these experiences; in Leipzig he learnt to know the *raisonnée* code which should, allegedly, be regarded as the basis of all poetry. The intellect was completely conscious of its limitations. The *raisonnée* code, that means, whoever followed this rule, could not deliver his aims differently; but a different poet is inclined to simplify the complications

and nuances of the basis, and it is therefore possible that the deductions were not formal and balanced when Goethe arrived in Leipzig. In fact, he understood rationalism to be an appeal to intelligence and intellect, caring little for human existence with its torments and passions. If we want to simplify further, we could even say: 'Rationalism'—intelligence and reasonable controlled existence; 'Storm and Stress'—passions and existence out of passionate impulses.

If we formulate the 1770's like this, then we do them an injustice in this respect, because one cannot live by a clear comparison between intellect and consciousness, but one can make allowances, in order to perceive the meaning of the Strassburg lyrics more readily.

The Storm and Stress is often interpreted as a revolution against a restricted and outdated form; this is correct when we think of revolutionary talents like Klinger and Lenz. In order to liberate themselves as young men, they overthrew convention and tradition. Their literary works are today known only to connoisseurs, but they are nevertheless representatives of a proud young generation. For the first time young people rebelled against etiquette and morals, which offered them an unintelligible education. In Storm and Stress opposition becomes publicly evident between the young and the old generation for the first time.

The young Goethe too was a critic; but already his temperament showed in his rule of conduct. With a few poems, the young Goethe in Strassburg set the course which he would follow all his life.

In Leipzig Goethe rebelled intuitively and instinctively against the primary importance attached to the intellect. In Strassburg he rebels even more, but unconsciously, against the sensitive and passionate mode of existence. The contradiction which appeared here between rationalism and Storm and Stress had taken on the form of two poles, in which tension the human being had to exist.

A poem which reaches beyond the ideas and programme of Storm and Stress, is: *Welcome and Farewell*. With this poem Storm and Stress not only reaches the peak, but already Goethe develops here a form, which points to his own, as well as the future of literature, in the next decades.

Welcome and Farewell portrays a horse-ride which Goethe undertakes to his beloved Friederike. He travels by night:

Already evening cradled earth,
 And on the mountains hung the night.
 The oak-tree, in a robe of mist,
 Stood like a towering giant there,
 Where darkness, with a hundred eyes
 Of blackness, from the thicket stared.

The dark of night, which wipes out differences and boundaries, is not intended here as an opportunity to give way to uncontrollable emotions. The night disposes of the boundaries produced by the light of day. The traveller will not lose himself in undefined premonitions in the dark and mist. On the contrary, the surroundings, not allowing clear distinction, appear ghostly because of the "robe of mist", yet are brought into a form which allows the first orientation. The surroundings are distorted, but this distortion is an attempt to find a hold, where the danger threatens to lose oneself into nothingness.

The relation that Goethe has here with Nature, is already very characteristic of him. The unknown infinity (which the Romantics later ecstatically celebrated, as in Novalis' *Hymns to the Night*) made him already suspicious during his Strassburg period. He endeavours to find a clear distinction, which defines and confronts the "I" with a partner. [The relation between "I" and "you", which remained decisive for Goethe's whole life, developed already in Strassburg, when the poet in love did not lose himself ecstatically in his happiness with Friederike, but received with her "you" always his own "I". Individuality has no limits, recognition and acceptance of such limits are not possible; herein will simultaneously be recognised the up to now referred to "I" and the "you" which confronted him. I and you, subject and object, exist in a sort of polar tension. The one will be preserved through the other. Personal limitations were not for Goethe (as later for the Romantics) prison walls, which had to be torn down; individuality was not a confined cell for him, from which one should liberate oneself. Goethe discovered the "I" (ego), as he himself always lived to an opposite; and therefore the "I" is never lonely or lost.]

We already find in *Welcome and Farewell* this attempt to connect the surrounding with "you". The combination of nouns—the robe of mist—must be understood in this way: the overall floating mist is defined by the comparison to a robe and at the same time related to it so that it should envelop. With "the oak-tree", which "stood like a

towering giant there," the young Goethe tries to give an unknown opposite personal significance, in order to shock his "I", but not necessarily to destroy it. This tendency to limit oneself even to a boundless surrounding and to create an opposite through personification, is expressed by Goethe with the use of verbs. The night sees with a hundred black eyes. The sensuous verbs belonging to the five senses are very often used by Goethe during his Strassburg period. Also "The moon from out a hill of cloud / Gazed through the vapour sleepily."

The first two verses mean that the individual, endangered by unsettled surroundings, tries to save himself by creating borders of personification. The third verse starts:

You I saw

The accusative of the personal pronoun of the second person singular, is put at the beginning for special accentuation. In spite of the unsettled surroundings, the self-attained confidence has become so important that the informal "du" (thou) of the loved one, to whom he is going, can be used directly.

The dark, that saw with "a hundred eyes of blackness", the night that "called a thousand monsters forth"—this dangerous hostile surrounding—all these have been pushed to the boundaries by concentration on the "I". Now the unchangeable and unexchangeable loved one can be admired:

A rosy-coloured Springtime air
Was all around that lovely face,
And tenderness for me—you gods!
I hoped, but not deserved such grace.

The poet's imagination, which puts at first the beloved one before his eyes is then followed by the actual meeting; but to this the poem does not refer at all. Only the line "And tenderness for me—you gods!" leads us to think that the two have met. The greeting is not communicated. But also no single moment of their being together is revealed; the poem describes, after having only hinted their happiness, already the pain of taking leave:

How soon, alas, at morning's sun
It cramped my heart to part again;

What ecstasy was in your kisses!
In your eyes, what bitter pain!

All through here, the extremes are put side by side: the bliss and the pain. Both belong together in a polar tension; love is only possible in the dynamics of the reciprocal experiences which are always in opposition to each other. Already the title *Welcome and Farewell* has related, by means of the conjunction "and", two paradoxical moments. Already here the polarity is discovered which transcends the "either-or", which had brought the young generation of the Storm and Stress in opposition and contradiction to rationalism. In his lyrics of Strassburg, Goethe finds that such juxtapositions like "controlled by the intellect"—rationalism—and "prime importance" of feelings and passions—Storm and Stress—are at their best only an academic theory; existence is too complicated to obey such simplifications.

And yet what joy to be thus loved!
And, gods, to love, what joy of joys!

Thus ends *Welcome and Farewell* which reconciles by an honest experience the antagonisms of the time around 1775, which have been so programmatically cleft apart. Once more, at the end of the poem, the paradox is expressed by the polarity in which the verb "to love" is at first used in passive infinitive and then in active infinitive. Activity and passivity are no contradictions which exclude each other, but oppositions inside of which we have to evolve.

The young Goethe of the Strassburg period is already on the way which he will have to follow his whole life; contradictions which would have torn apart others—like Kleist or Hölderlin—he could relate in harmony; this was less an intellectual achievement than an expression of the destiny of his existence which, in spite of all dramatic and desperate conflicts, had for his whole life a fortunate course. The beginnings were developed in the lyrics which he had written in Strassburg: Goethe does not give way to a misty pantheistic feeling, when he experiences Nature; he stands opposite to her and tries to create by means of personification a partner, which permits him a dialogue. Even in *Heidenröslein* (The Tiny Wild Rose) which is written in the style of a folk-song, there is a dialogue between the boy and the rose which he wants to pluck. The dialogue

is the verbal expression of the feeling of life from which the existence of Goethe springs: the "I" which is always related to a "you" recognises and investigates itself never in isolation; he stands for himself not in isolation, but in relation to a partner. The continuous alternation between the near and the far, between identification and the separation of subject and object, is the secret of Goethe's life and his poetry; and this secret no philosophy can definitely establish; it remains poetic.

Lines of verse in translation are quoted from *Goethe*, Jeanne Ancelet-Hustache, tr. by Cecily Hastings, Grove Press, New York.

MUSIC, RHYME AND REFRAIN IN INDIAN POETRY

ALOKERANJAN DASGUPTA

A CHALLENGE TO THE ANTIQUITIES

WHAT Saraha, Kāhṇa-pāda, Jayadeva¹ and others did in their lyrics was not an innovation. Behind it was a historical force, which in course of time burst into these lyricists. Bengali poetry, from its inception, was espoused to music, both vocal and instrumental. It would not be safe to adopt George Thomson's attitude and say that this musical accompaniment was introduced in the same way as in the case of ancient Greek and Irish poetry.² Nor would it be right to hold that this accompaniment occurred only in "popular and merely natural poetry" ('la poésie populaire'), as Montaigne, although in a different context, put it.³ In its long preparatory procedure, Bengali poetry strove to express itself through music, but it took time to gather the necessary momentum. It was not an easy and unquestioned acceptance of a hereditary factor. The old Indo-Aryan predecessor, i.e., Sanskrit, did not give something ready-made to the later Indo-Aryan, and the whole purpose of the latter had to be achieved through persistent and independent effort. It should be remembered in this connection that classical Sanskrit poetry was meant to be recited, and not sung. We should, however, try to understand the attitude of R̥gvedic poetry to music, for the point has a bearing upon our subject.

The R̥gveda, when sung, turned into the Sāmaveda. There are references in the Black Yajurveda (6-1-6, 7-5-10) and the Kauṣitaki Brāhmaṇa (29-5) as regards the place of dance, music and musical instruments in some Vedic rituals.⁴ But it has not been ascertained whether any reciprocity between these arts was prescribed in Sāmavedic rites. However, the view of Maṭaṅga in this connection, referred to by Kallināth, the renowned commentator of *Śaṅgīta-ratnākara*, throws light on the point. Maṭaṅga holds that the music in the Sāmaveda is, *in esse*, recitative music (*gītipradhāna* *avitti*).⁵ Moreover, those who have specialised in the subject have informed us of details regarding the austerities observ-

ed in the Sāmavedic customs. These austerities, it can safely be conjectured, did not allow the singer to emancipate his heart in its emotive totality.⁶ Tethered to a frugal tonality, gnomonic in objective impact, these Sāmavedic versicles do not strictly fall within the species of musical lyrics.⁷ Nor do they comprise the supple crescendo and diminuendo of the Indian classical music. The "Sāman chant" was only "conceived of as a downward series of notes from the highest" (avarohakrama).⁸ The avarohakrama itself without ārohakrama cannot be termed as 'rāga' proper. Since it is pretty difficult to discover the complete musical structure of the Sāmaveda from its numerical notation, it is not safe to declare categorically that the liturgical notes, e.g., Kruṣṭa, Prathama, Dvītiya, Tṛtiya, Caturtha, Mandra, Atisvārya, correspond typically to Madhyama, Gāndhāra, Rṣabha, Ṣaḍaja, Niṣāda, Dhaivata and Pañcama. The seven secular notes, combined with śrūtis (microtones), compose a definite 'rāga-rūpa' (the melodic corpus), a conjecture of the existence of which in the Sāmaveda would carry a fallacy of prochronism. It would not be irrelevant to point out here that etymologically the word 'rāga' is charged with a colourful import and it receives its form from contact with lyrical verse.

vicitra-varṇālaṁkāre viśeṣo yo dhvanerihā |
grahādisvarasantarbhō rañjako rāga ucyate ||

(The sound volume which is formed with a transilient series of ornamental notes and which, beginning with a proper starting note, produces a well-knit pattern of colourful notes, is called rāga.)

Vema-bhūpāla defines *rāga-kāvya* (a poem based on rāga) as follows:

svarasya raktirūpatvādgītyātmā rāga ucyate |
kāryaṁ tadā rāgabhūtaṁ rāgakāvyamudāhṛtam ||⁹

(That which colours a musical note and has the spirit or soul of a song is rāga. Rāga-kāvya gives body to the spirit and makes it effective.)

The emergence of some sort of lyric, in the proper sense of the term, came to assume a shape at about the 2nd century A.D. These lyrics were termed as dhruvā, "a class of songs to be sung during the performance of a rūpaka."¹⁰ These songs, background music¹¹ as

... moods and moments, wrought with a
... melodious pattern.¹² They were, curiously
... only in Śaurasēnī Prākṛt:

... dhruvāyām samprajayet¹³

... that dhruva songs were to be composed in Śaurasēnī
... full fledged musical poems of a purely secular
... not prohibited, by the patrons of Sanskrit.
... reached a stage where it gave due recog-
... languages, although after a process of literary
... The most pronounced example of this accommodating atti-
... the songs in Mahārāṣṭrī, the Prākṛt *par-*
... Why is it that not even one of the extant songs attri-
... in Sanskrit? It is evident that classical Sanskrit
... upon a classicism which would dominate over
... and, therefore, the hiatus between music and poetry widened
... more. Was it not, then, a self-conscious innovation on the
... of poetry that bridged the gulf to
... poetic forms?

THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE N.I.A. ENTERPRISE

(i) *Relevant Parallelism*

The marked difference regarding vital points of departure, among
Sanskrit, Prākṛt and Apabhraṃśa is clear even from their respective
names. Here we are urged to draw an analogy. Something very
similar to this took place "when the Latin of everyday intercourse
(popular Latin, vulgar Latin) had so far diverged from literary
Latin that it was necessary to find a name for the former."¹⁴ The
term Apabhraṃśa originally meant "speech fallen off (from the
mouth), vulgar speech".¹⁵ Here we must remember the phonetic
character of vulgar Latin. "The speaker of Vulgar Latin
more frequently takes the attitude of *listener* rather than that of
speaker. It may therefore be assumed that his phonetic expression
is regulated more by the sensorial than motor and articulatory aspects
of his organ of speech. We must see the relation of Vulgar Latin
to classical Latin somewhat as the relation of a dialect to the written

language. Is it strange that in the course of centuries two different phonetic structures were evolved? For in each case typical situations are continually arising that require different adjustments. The man who speaks the written language, or reads it aloud, the educated society man, the teacher, the orator, the actor, all these are forced towards greater clarity, articulation . . . , the speaker of Vulgar Latin, the peasant, the working everyday man, towards greater sound volume. The diction of written language attempts to arrange the phonetic body objectively and plastically, as though there were *an eye in the ear* . . . Both types of speaker wish to be understood and believed; but, to reach the same goal, the speaker of Classical Latin prefers the *visually* more objective, the speaker of Vulgar Latin the *acoustically* more objective method."¹⁶

The excerpt is rather long, but relevant. It also applies, almost word for word, to the phonetic change that took place while old Indo-Aryan evolved into new Indo-Aryan languages. Sanskrit leaned towards rational clarity; its descendants definitely sought emotional expression. The qualities of *regularity, uniformity, precision* and *balance* which have been declared necessary by Matthew Arnold for a perfect prose-style,¹⁷ may as well be regarded as the *conditio sine qua non* of any good Sanskrit poem. Apabhraṃśa poetry, in a spirit of healthy reaction, set a programme of alliance with music. Music, dance-music and instrumental music rapidly paved the way to its transformation into new prosodic arrangements. From the identity of names, noted below, it would not be rash to deduce that many of the Apabhraṃśa metres emerged from either dance rhythm or from the accompaniment of instrumental music:

(1) *Ghattā* (*pāṭavādyam*)

(a) nibaddhamarthaṃ prathamam geyam karābhyāṃ ca vādayet |
anibaddham tatascārdham karābhyāṃ vādayedhi ya ||
punaranibaddha khaṇḍasya vādyād ghattā nigadyate

—Vena-bhūpāla¹⁸

(*Ghattā* as beating on drum:

At first one should beat the drum with both hands to perform the regular portion of the song. Next he should perform the irregular or unschematic portion by beating the drum with the hands. Once more he will have to beat the remaining of the unschematic portion on the drum.)

It may be noted that the instructor Vema-bhūpāla emphasises the interpolated portion of music and tāla so as to signify the essence of song and tāla.)

(c) *Chanda (chā)*

gopādhāha dūtthau chanda ukittthau ghattā mattā vasattikari |
 amuttā satta gāṇa nābi pāa bhāṇa tinni laha anta ghari ||
 —Piṅgala¹⁰

(A *phatta* has 62 mātrās. There are 7 *gāṇas* of 4 mātrās each in both the feet with a *laghu* [uuu] at the end of each.)

(d) *Carcari (mṭya)*

yaśasakakramenaiṇa nartakayo viniveśita |
 vānātalanvite vādye vādyānanetha vādake ||
 praviśya yugmaśo raṅgaṇ gāyantascarcariṇ muhuh |
 dvipadmathakū gānavastucitapadottarām ||
 śṛṅgātravarāṇanopetam vasantasamayotsave |
 kurvanti nartanam saiśa carcarīti nigadyate ||
 —Vema-bhūpāla

(*Carcari* as dance:

Female dancers in *carcarī* are arrayed in the same order as that of *rasa*, a circular dance connected with the loves of Kṛṣṇa. The instrumentalists are to accompany it with ornamented tāla. The dancing couples are to enter the stage and they should sing the *carcarī* song instantly. The song would be in the nature of couplet or couplets that befits its spirit. Such a dance, which is based on love sentiment and performed during the spring-festival, is called *carcarī*.)

(Note: Here also we recognise the beautiful adjustment between dance and song, vocal and instrumental alike. The singing of a couplet or several couplets is prescribed, but any strict rule has not been laid down as to the number of couplets. This lends mysterious suggestiveness to the matter. And that the whole composition has an indeterminate yet esemplastic form does not escape our notice.)

(e) *Chari (deśi-tāla)*

chāmānta drutadvandvāṇaṣṭāvante laghustathā
 —Vema-bhūpāla

o ó o ó o ó o ó o ó o ó o ó o ó

—the scansion by Vema-bhūpāla²⁰

(*Carcari* as a metre derived from the folk:

Eight fast-moving pairs, with the stress on the second in each case, and ending with a short syllable, is called the *carcari tāla*.)

(Note: H. A. Popley defines the *virāma* as 'rest used for lengthening the *druta* and *laghu* by any fraction'.²¹ In *Bhakti-ratnākara* 'druta' has been defined as $\frac{1}{2}$ of a *mātra* and 'anudruta' or *virāma* as $\frac{1}{4}$ of a *mātrā*.²² All this implies that it is a pause in time-measure only to quicken the rapidity of rhythm.)

Sonority and lyricism being the sole end, some of the *tālas* have transgressed their allotted positions. For instance, *ghattā* does not always need to remain fettered within 62 *mātrās*, but can assume a different metrical body in order to acclimatise itself to the versatile shift of thematic and structural emphasis.

Dhāhil, for instance, while paying homage to the goddess *Sarasvatī* in his 'Paumasiricariu' (the biography of *Padmasrī*), writes the following verse in the *ghattā* metre:

paṇamibi jaya-sāmiṇi | naya sura kāmīṇi | vāgesari siya kamala kara |
paṇayahun sabbhabin | jiye pabhabīṇ | kavihin payattaha vāṇi vara ||

(I worship you, thou heavenly Nymph with lotus-like hands, you who pervade the world and whose influence is great among the poets, and who render their speech excellent.)

But Puṣpadanta, another Jaina poet, while describing the city of Magadha in his *Nāyakumāracarīu* (the biography of *Nāgakumār*), expresses his wonder in a quick-moving *ghattā* which is much akin to the 'dohā' metre:

tahiṇ puravaru | nāmeṇ rāyagihu | kaṇaya rayāṇa | kodihīṇ ghaḍiu |
valivaṇḍa dharaṇ | tahoṇ suravai | hiṇ ṇaṇ suranayaru | gayaṇa paḍiu ||

(There is a well-built mansion where there are crores of gold pieces and gems. It seems as if paradise has fallen there from the sky.)

It is interesting to note that a change in theme produces a change

the metre. The latter poet is not ready to describe a city in the manner in which the former describes the goddess. This points to the preference for 'inner form' to 'outer form'. Alillaha or aḍillā, a tala of 16 mātrās, has been permitted by poets to take any form only for achieving melodious effect:

sulā sulāim binieppiunu (?) iha pathvar sāare |
sutaṇu bibihavittai susaṃciaguṇamaṇohare ||
aḍilā hoi ahīraiai paangi bhāsai |
sajamueliṇ paehim samaddhasamehiṇ krna saā ||

(Śrītisukhāni paryālocya iha prastārasāgare |
sutaṇu vividhavṛttāni susaṃcitaguṇamaṇohare ||
aḍilā bhavati abhīryā natāṅgi bhāṣayā |
sayamakai padaiḥ samārdhasamaiḥ kuru sadā ||)

(Note: *aḍilālakṣhanam aniditṭharūpena*.²³)

The italicised words show that Apabhraṃśa was even ready, if necessary, to sacrifice the narrowly conditioned intelligibility of language to its indefinite mysteriousness. The very word *aniditṭharūpa* (inchoate form) denotes this. This mysteriousness was achieved by dexterity of assonance, rhyming and alliteration. The example adduced by Viṛahāṅka may be quoted:

ghoreni gumagumei bhamarāhuṃ *sarantia* |
paṅkaṃṣakulehiṃ salilehi *sarantia* ||
bhamarabharonamehiṃ kusumehi *sarantaru* |
viasai ana bhisuva vaṃsahu *sarantaru* ||

Apart from other alliterations, the word-play of *sarantia* and *sarantaru* is unique in the sense that the meaning here does not get the upper hand, and that the sound has been given prominence. This holds true for the major portion of Apabhraṃśa poetry and its successors. A word or two must be remembered here as to the change in the basis of metres that took place in the transitional period. The predominance of musical mātrāvṛtta or moric metre may be said to be this epoch-making feature. Formerly, the dictum of Pīṭhaka, 'Yadakṣarasaparimānatacchandam' had to be adhered to.²⁴ But popular mātrāvṛtta introduced measurement by time,

(ii) *Rhyme and Refrain*

The conception of yati and yamaka in the meanwhile underwent a fundamental transformation which hastened the advent of the end-rhyme. The whole matter made itself felt in stanza-construction through couplet-combinations. "The dvipadis ... appear to have been song metres sung in the dhumāli tāla²⁵ of 8 mātrās... There yati is musical and it coincides with the tālagana and the beat of the drum. This being so, many poets were tempted to introduce a yamaka in this place to heighten the sound effect."²⁶ The story is fascinating and it tempts us to investigate Keith's surmise that the end-rhyme is a folk invention. Admitting that aid to memory is something that popular poetry cares about, one should not be led to infer that the end-rhyme is an invention 'of the people'. The following folk-verses will emphatically contradict Keith's contention:

1. harae nai bābāēñ burui enā
erem juri bābāñ nñam kñā
satu bābā gheṭ me meḷa tanḍi cālāme
erem juri bābā upel bāhā ||

—(Santhali folk-song)²⁷

("Now I am no more in my teens," the son tells his father, "and naturally you are in search of my bride. Go to the fair with fried barley, and there you will find her in bloom like an *upel* flower.")

2. gādā nāde nāḍete kaumbiḍ bāhāh
dejahk tegi sauri vermai hasuren
siht gocbai tegi gāte sārāsauti
gutugālam tegi gāte bermay rakahpe ||

—(Santhali folk-song)²⁸

(*Kaumbid* flowers are in bloom along the river-banks. The sun went down as I climbed on the tree, O friend! Deep night fell as I gathered the flowers in my skirt. And then again the sun rose as I made a wreath with those flowers.)

3. eha beti bahut adhīnī mere babal dhol baro
eha bara lanḍā merī beti bara sambladā ||

—(Punjabi folk-song)²⁹

(The modest girl: "Please fetch me a bridegroom, father."
The father: "I have already brought a handsome bridegroom for you.")

...plotted (apla) nai yai
...khanu anāku
...khanu āraa - cum naku bujakha |

...khanu
...khanu
...khanu
...khanu

(Tippurah folk-song for harvest)³⁰

Three settled peacefully near the market with a cock and a hen.
They have splendid plumage. The hen picks the earth with its
cluck. The red pig also picks the food in the same manner.)

...pate te paṅgalā ūpe re, choslā khandabali
...paga de jo re choslā khandapatthi
—(Gujarati folk-song)³¹

(The wife of the Sun-god gives new limbs to the human bodies,
especially to those who have lost their legs.)

The above poems, all pertaining to the mood of lyrical expectation and endowed with astonishing cadence, are still lacking in end-rhyme. The end rhyme, therefore, is not something invented 'by the people' but innovated 'for the people'. Troubadour poetry solves the riddle and helps us to understand that all these innovations like stanza-construction and rhyme must have come from some cult-conscious sect which acted as a mediating link between the people and the élite.³² Similarly, the patronless Apabhramśa vernaculars secured prestige not from the pro-Vedic section, but from the anti-Vedic religious reformers who also needed the patronage of the general masses. The Jain poet-reformers came to the fore. They did not, or rather could not, neglect the folk-mind, pregnant with all its rich potentialities. In order to reach the masses, simply for a wider circulation, these religious reformers pushed on to their poetry. Phonetically sensitive, these poets availed themselves of the popular devices of Apabhramśa poetry.³³ The names of Caturmukha, Svayambhu, Puṣpadanta and others, the leading Jain poets of this interim period, will ever be remembered with due reverence. What they derived from popular poetry was its mnemonic genius. The variety of memorable speech seen in the stanza-forms of these poets was largely due to alliteration, assonance and *antyānuprāsa* (end-rhyme), because these devices have a plastic force.³⁴ Nathuram Premi, while telling the

history of Indian literature, has informed us of the most significant of these esemplastic stanzaic patterns, *paddhatiā*, which is the immediate predecessor of the Bengali *payār* form of verse:

“Apabhraṃśa poetry has employed sandhi in lieu of *suga*. In each sandhi there should be many *kaḍavakas*. Each *kaḍavaka* consists of 8 *yamakas* whereas one *yamaka* is made of two *padas* (couplets). A *pada*, if it is to be composed in *paddhatiā*, would be set in 16 *mātrās*. According to Acharya Hemchandra, 4 *paddhatiā* or 8 lines make a *kaḍavaka*. In the end of one *kaḍavaka* there should be the *dhruvaka* or a *ghattā*.”³⁵

The existence of *ghattā* at the end of *kaḍavaka* leads us to suppose that this must be in the nature of choral refrain and the word might have come from ‘*ghāta*’ (to strike). This certainly means that originally it was linked with group songs and dances and the word signified the beat on the drum or cymbal when the leader paused to give the sign to strike in with some familiar refrain. And later the stage came when ‘the original homogeneity of the folk’ began to break up. As the people’s laureate stepped forward from the singing and dancing crowd and gave his short improvisations, so the actual habit of individual composition sprang from choral composition and performance.³⁶ This is the way in which the Indian lyric, in the truest sense of the term, was born. The Jaina poet-teachers made use of it in their *carit-kāvyas* (biographical narratives). This is the way in which proto-Bengali lyric also came into existence. It sprang from choral poetry, occasional and festal in character. The Buddhist reformers transmuted it into religious lyrics.

THE LEGACY OF APABHRAṂŚA POETRY: A POSTSCRIPT

Eminent scholars like Dr. Hazariprasad Dvivedi and Ramchari Sinha Dinkar are more or less under the impression that the remarkable change of ideas and forms in Apabhraṃśa poetry is due to Arabic infiltration. Though Sinha is rather hesitant about it, yet now and then he returns to the point that unforeseen modes of medieval Indian poetry were strengthened by Islamic and Iranic impact.³⁷ Dr. Dvivedi has, however, no hesitation in saying that end-rhyme in Apabhraṃśa poetry was a result of India’s contact with the migrant tribes in the north-western frontier round about the sixth and seventh centuries.

It is not clear in this connection, specifically of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, which was replete with the device of the end-rhyme.³⁸ One cannot deny the presence of end-rhyme in pre-Islamic poetry.³⁹ Nor could one doubt that there was a relation between music and poetry in the pre-Islamic period.⁴⁰ But that does not prove its influence on Apabhramsa poetry. The mingling of Aryan and Semitic elements gave some new notes to Spanish poetry, and troubadours like Ibn Zazal. But the poem (1160 A.D.) contributed a finished art-form to the world, all this took a long time to happen and in any case has nothing to do with Indian lyric forms.⁴¹ Furthermore, Jaychandra Vidyalankar and many other reliable historians attach much importance to the fact that from the time of Harun Al Rashid (786-809) onwards, Indian literature and science made a considerable contribution to the Arabs.⁴¹ The whole point, however, does not rest on this assessment of influence. From internal evidence it has got to be recognised that Indian poetry learnt to use end-rhyme by an inherent and gradual process of its own which was quite independent of, if not simultaneous with, Arabic poetry. In the field of narrative poetry the Sufi poet Jari wrote his 'Padmāvaṭ' in the 'masnavi' pattern of Arabic poetry. But while translating it into Bengali, Saiyad Ālāol, the seventeenth century court-poet, simply adhered to payār. Only once reluctantly Ālāol promised to his patron to emulate 'bayt', the Arabic form of verse:

sthir kai āmāre karila āṅgikār |
 bhaṅgiyā bayet chanda racite payār ||⁴²

But nowhere did Ālāol observe the rules of 'bayt' which is somewhat complex in its provision for hemistichs. Krishnadhan Bandopadhyay has shown convincingly that the gazl form of Arabic verse was imitated by the Indian lyricists, but that it was transformed into tappā. Gazl, he says, began as improvisation which evolved into rektā and culminated in Persian and Urdu poetry, whereas tappā has never missed its characteristically Indian modulation of rāgas and rāgīs.⁴³ Both Persian and Urdu poetry are indebted to Arabic poetry for rhyme and refrain (kāfiyā and radīf). Bengali poetry, on the other hand, took these practices from Apabhramsa poetry.

In the *Banṭi Khanda* (the episode of the flute) of *Kṛṣṇa-kīrtan*, the poet Bāṇu Candidāsa, while describing a natural setting, writes:

bāñsi bājāila yave kāñhe |
kokil kaila pāligāne ||

(When Kṛṣṇa began playing on his flute, the cuckoos responded in choral refrain.)

Dr. Sukumar Sen has pointed out that 'pāligāna' is a portion of the choral refrain⁴⁴ and has attracted our attention to the following line in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* where it is stated that the duty of the throng (dohār) is to join the leader in pāligāna:

ār pañcajana kaila tār pāligāne
(Middle Book, Canto 13)

It is obvious from the description of kīrtan that follows the above line of *Caitanya Caritāmṛta* that padāvalī-kīrtan put a considerable stress on refrain which rendered the whole song concrete and coherent, interrelated and well-knit.

Therefore it would be erroneous to assume that padāvalī-kīrtan exempts itself from the lyrical brevity. Narahari Chakravarty in his *Bhakti-ratnākara* has categorically written:

param kautukī kṛṣṇa lalitādi prati |
kṣudra gīta gāite dīlen anumati ||
śuddha sālager prāy kṣudra gīta hay |
antyānuprāsa praśasta śāstrete kahay ||⁴⁵

(Kṛṣṇa in good humour asked Lalitā and others to sing short lyrics. Pure sālaga or chāyālag often consists of short lyrics which depend much on end-rhyme.)

As Professor Amiya Nath Sanyal puts it, chāyālag is a rāga of the hybrid class. Rāgas like lalit, śrī and purabī dhāneśrī fall into this class because they are composed of two different classes.⁴⁶ Kīrtan has a pronounced liking for chāyālag rāga which works out a complicated yet rich tapestry of emotion. Narahari Chakravarty's further classification of kṣudra gīta into citrapada, citrakathā, dhruvapada and pāñcālī should not be lost sight of.⁴⁷ The provision of short lyrics or kṣudra gīta cast into chāyālag is a way of defining padāvalī-kīrtan which has a variegated and elongated texture of rāga and which is an annexation of short lyrics. In other words, kīrtan is a prolonged song which contains short lyrics. That these lyrics abound in rhyme and

A couplet combination is evident from Narahari's combination of each of the four types referred to. Particularly the type, namely dhruvapada, is to be noted, for dhruvapada is that refrain. This once again reveals the intimate relation between rhyme and refrain. One cannot abide without the other type of pāñcālī is possibly no other than pāñcālī, the form of narrative Bengali poetry. The way Narahari combines it proves the reciprocal relation between the narrative form in pre-modern Bengali poetry. Some other monosyllabic refrain invite our attention. *Ghoṣā* is one which means the same as *dhuā* or *odhruvapada* of a song. The refrain assumed new names—*viṣṇupada* and *gopībhāva*—of *Madhavācārya's Jaganāna*. Bāsu Ghosh in his *Gaurāṅga-carita* calls the name as 'lāṭā'. In Assamese, the name *Ghoṣā* exists as a monosyllabic refrain.⁴⁸ *Madhavācārya's* *padhāvāli*, indeed, affected considerably post-Caitanya devotional poetry. It is interesting to observe that *Madhavācārya's* date of his composition being 1579) and *Dvija Rāmadeva's* (both belonging to the Śākta cult, owe their musically rich poetic forms chiefly to Vaiṣṇava *padāvāli*. Some of the lines from the latter are quoted below:

1. phirata mohana veśa |
eki eki pura venu jaladāa tulita tanu
ākul karala prāṇa śeṣ ||
(set in kedar rāga)

(He charmingly adorned, he wanders about. With his flute and his head resembling body he fills full the hearts.)

2. dayāl more emani karila |
bāndhiya kumati pāṣe jaladhīi dubāila ||
(set in barādi rāga)

(O compassionate one! Do I deserve this retribution? You have chained me with evils and have drowned me into the sea.)

3. śuni bāñśir tāna ākul haaila prāṇa
maraṇa jiyana kānu pāṇe |
dvija rāmadeva bhāṇe sei boāñśir sane
nā gele bāñce nā prāṇe ||
(set in tuṇḍi āswāri rāga)⁴⁹

(Hearing the modes of his flute, one's heart becomes enchanted and life and death flow towards Kānu. Says Dvija Rāmadeva: to follow the way of the flute is the way to live.)

The last refrain is particularly reminiscent of Candidāsa's touchstone line in the same context. What is most relevant in this connection is the name of Daulat Kājī, the poetic precursor of Saiyad Ālāol. In his *Satimaynā O Lor Candrāni* (1622-1635), he made confident use not only of the overworn Vaiṣṇava imagery, but also the musical pattern of the Vaiṣṇava lyrics. There are at least fifteen refrains in his narrative, written under the direct influence of the Vaiṣṇava poets. The following one, for instance, bears the diction of Vidyāpati:

mālini ki kahava vedana ora |
lora bine bāmahi bidhi bhela mora ||³⁰

(Mālini, my sorrow knows no bounds. Without Lorā, [I feel that] fate is unkind indeed.)

Daulat Kājī, like Dvija Rāmadeva, has conjoined lyric and narrative by means of refrains which are condensed in arrangement. They have served the purpose of mitigating the dullness of prolonged narration. One more point is to be noted.

Our seventeenth century poets, Kājī and Ālāol, were, like the major poets of the fifteenth century, chiefly translators. Kṛttivāsa and Mālādhara Basu rendered Sanskrit epics in Bengali. Kājī and Ālāol imported romantic legends and thus extended the geographical frontiers of Bengali literature. However, both groups of poets, truly speaking, have attempted adaptation, and not translation. All their interest was in adapting alien and congenial elements into Bengali without marring the spirit of the language. The extract that follows furnishes one more proof:

ṭheṭa caupāīya dohā kahila sādhanē |
nā bujhe gohāri bhāṣā kon kon jane ||
deśi bhāṣā kaha tāke pāñcālīr chande ||
sakale śuniyā jena bujhay sānande ||

* * *

tave kājī daulat bujhiya āratī |
pāñcālīr chande kahe maynār bhārātī ||

Vel Khan said: The story we are going to tell has been told in dōhā and caupāi in Hindi. But that language is not understood by all. You better use your vernacular⁵¹ so that everyone can enjoy the work. Daulat Kājī consented to the proposal and began to relate the story in pāñcālī style.)

The above-mentioned caupāi-dohā style evolved out of the paddhati style found in Jaina carit-kāvya. Caupāi-dohā style first occurred in Puri Apabhraṃśa and it was afterwards established in all its glory in the prabandha kāvya form of Awadhi language.⁵² The popularity of this style, with its clear-cut couplet-arrangements, was due to its power of conveying didactic messages in a concrete way. Daulat rightly said:

puraini saghana cāru caupāi |
yugati māñju mani sipa sohai ||
chanda sorāṭha sundara dohā |
soi bahuraṅga kamala kula sohā ||

(Beautiful caupāis are like lotuses. And the premises are like precious shells. So also the sorāṭha metre and dohā are like lotuses of many colours.)

Puri also had a close relation with paddhatiā (paddhatikā). But it did not blindly observe any fixed number of couplets to achieve its end. Therefore, besides its didactic vein, it created its sub-species (such as lāchāḍī, laghu tripadī and dīrgha tripadī) in order to express various moods. Thus Apabhraṃśa poetry left a legacy of immense potentialities to its successors. It created different traditions which began to take different courses. Each vernacular poet, while adhering to his deśi-bhāṣā, developed a cohesive attitude towards the languages of the neighbouring provinces. It was the Brajabuli language which could once dissolve the formal differences and provide the poets with a common forum of expression. But again the gap widened, perhaps for the better, for each vernacular came into its own and received independent forms.

¹ Both Saraha and Kāhṇa-pada belonged to the Sahajiyā order of the proto-Bengali poets. Their poetry bears resemblance to the *trobar clus* style of composition regarding hinted obliquity. Their date falls sometime between the tenth and twelfth centuries.

Jayadeva, the last of the great Sanskrit poets, was also really an exponent of Bengali poetry. Although a court-poet of Lakṣmaṇasena (12th century), he compared the Bengali mind with the Sanskrit while most of his contemporaries clung blindly to the latter. This spirit of comparison incited him to mould the classical pan-Indian Kṛṣṇa-legend into a romantic Kṛṣṇa-kathā. And the whole of India, again, took from him the inheritance of this romanticism which is Bengali in character.

² George Thomson—*Marxism and Poetry*. London, 1946. p. 7.

³ *Of Vain Subtleties or Subtle Devices* in John Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays*. Gresham Publishing Co., Ltd. p. 127.

⁴ H. H. Wilson, V. Raghavan, K. R. Pisaroti and Amulya Charan Vidyabhushan *The Theatre of the Hindus*. Calcutta, 1955. pp. 206-7.

⁵ P. V. Kane—*History of Sanskrit Poetics*. Bombay, 1951.

⁶ Rev. J. Stevenson—*Translations of the Saṃhitā of the Sāmaveda*. Calcutta, 1906. (The translator's preface, vi-vii).

⁷ Rājasekhara's attitude towards music is particularly significant in this connection. He nullifies the claim of the inextricable bond between music and poetry in the Vedas and "states, however, on the authority of Drauhini that the science of music which is both a Upaveda and a part of the Sāmaveda and which is accessible to all castes alike should be called the fifth Veda." (Kāvya-mīmāṃsā of Rājasekhara, II i 25, ed. Late C. D. Dalal M.A. and Pandit R. A. Sastri.) The point is to be noted that music, as implied in the statement, is not a part and parcel of the Sāmaveda, but only incidental to it.

⁸ H. A. Popley—*The Music of India*. Calcutta, 1950, p. 29. Also see Sripada Sarmana Bhattacharya's introduction to *Sāmaveda Saṃhitā*, Surat, 1956.

⁹ Both the definitions have been quoted from *Bharatakoṣa*, ed. Ramakrishna Kavi, Tirupati, 1951.

¹⁰ Ref. Prākṛt verses of the *Bharata Nāṭya Śāstra* (ed. Dr. Manomohan Ghosh), Calcutta, 1932. pp. 9-14.

¹¹ Manomohan Ghosh—*Prākṛt Sāhitya*. Calcutta, 1957. p. 3.

¹² Saradatanaya in *Bhāva-Prakāśana* (30th Section), ed. Y. Y. Swami and K. S. Ramaswami Sastri Siromani. Baroda, 1930.

¹³ Cited from *Bharata Nāṭya Śāstra* (Vol. I) by Dr. Manomohan Ghosh in his *Prākṛt Verses of the Bharata Nāṭya Śāstra*.

¹⁴ E. R. Curtius—*European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. New York, 1953. p. 31.

¹⁵ M. R. Majumdar in the essay entitled *Growth of Gujarati*, University of Bombay, Vol. V Pt. III, November 1936.

¹⁶ Karl Vossler—*The Spirit of Language in Civilization*. Kegan Paul, London, 1932. pp. 109-10, footnote.

¹⁷ Matthew Arnold—*Essays in Criticism*, Second Series. Macmillan, London, 1911. p. 39.

¹⁸ Vema-bhūpāla's statement is cited from his *Sanigita-cintāmaṇi* edited by M. R. Kavi in *Bharatakoṣa*.

¹⁹ See introduction to *Bhavisayattakahā* by Dhanapāla, ed. C. D. Dalal. Baroda, 1922.

(c) The definitions of carcarī are from Vema-bhūpālā's *Saṅgita-cintāmaṇi*.

(d) E. P. S. *The Music of India* (p. 75). 2nd edition, Calcutta, 1950.

(e) *Pratyaśakata* 5[2981].

(f) See *Uttarajātisamucchaya*, ed. H. D. Velankar. (*Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, New Series, Vol. 5, 1929, vide 4[32].)

(g) "In the oldest Indian metre only the number of syllables is fixed, while the quantity of syllables is only partially determined."—M. Winternitz in *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1927, p. 61. Or again, to quote E. Arnold, "Verse was measured solely by the number of syllables without regard to their quantity." (*Vedic Metre*, Cambridge, 1905, p. 19)

(h) This is particularly important because the dhumāli tāla evolved into dhā-māli, a burlesque about a god and a type of musical prologue, purely instrumental in character, in kirtan of Bengal.

(i) H. D. Velankar *Apabhraṃśa Metres II* (*Journal of the University of Bombay*, Vol. V, November 1936, Pt. III).

(j) Borrowed from Sri Mangal Marandi, a Santhal teacher of the Rural Training Centre, Kukhin, Santhal Parganas.

(k) From Santosh Chandra Majumdar's Collection (*Visvabharati Patrika*, October, 1946, p. 117).

(l) Hanumanesh Tripathi—*Kavitā-Kaumudī*, Vol. III, 2nd edition, Bombay, 1955.

(m) Quoted from *Sākṣara* (March 1960, p. 102), a monthly journal in Bengali published by Education Directorate, Tripura Administration, Agartala.

(n) Quoted from Pusker Chandravaker's article entitled *Worship of Rannade in the Garo Hills Folk-lore and Literature*. Translation by the author.

(o) The following books have helped me to establish this point: J. C. L. Goussier de Sismonde's *Historical View of the Literature of the South of Europe* (ed. F. Rostoe), Henry Colburn & Co., 1823; H. J. Chaytor's *Troubadours and Minstrels*, Cambridge, 1912; the same author's *From Script to Print* (an introduction to medieval vernacular literature), Cambridge, 1950.

(p) This urge of the Jainas for literature also prevailed, to a large extent, in the Tamil region. Sri S. V. Pillai, while throwing light on the point, says, "The Jainas were the real apostles of culture and learning. The Jainas . . . began cultural contact with the people and it was only later that they tried to bring the rulers and kings." (*History of Tamil Language and Literature, from the beginning to 1000 A.D.*, Madras, 1956.) It should not, however, be assumed that the Tamil speaking region had anything to do with the enterprise of end-rhyme which permeated the poetry of the N. I. A. phase that belonged to the North Indian group of languages. An authority on Tamil poetry has expressed the opinion that end-rhyme, considered to be lacking in status in Tamil poetry, was not the agent which formed the lines of a poem into stanzaic patterns. "EIBHU," he says, "is the rhyme at the close of the lines, which is used in the languages of Europe. This kind of consonance, however being despised as wanting in dignity, is hardly to be met with in any species of [Tamil] poetry. There are still other kinds of rhymes, which, as they are seldom used, I think it unnecessary to explain." (Reverend Father C. J. Beschi in *A Grammar of the High Dialect of Tamil Language Termed Shen Tamil*, to which is added an introduction to Tamil poetry, by B. G. Babington, Madras, 1822, p. 78).

(q) *anuprāśadhīyā gaudāistadīṣṭam bandhagauravāt* (Dandin's *Kāvyādarśa*, 1-44).

(r) Such a technique is desirable in the gaudī style owing to the presence of anuprāśa (there being tightness of composition). *Op. cit.*, edited and translated by E. S. Ramani Roy, Calcutta, 1956.

উপস্থিত হ'লে যখন কোনো-কোনোটি বালুস্তম্ভের মতো ভেঙে পড়ে, তখনো আমরা খুব বেশি অস্বস্তি বোধ করি না। 'পার্শ্বনাথ যখন দেখলেন যে প্রাণীহত্যা না-ক'রে রুঁচে থাকা যায় না, তখন তিনি পানাহার বন্ধ করলেন, গতি রুদ্ধ কবলেন—ওক, স্চল, নিবাক ও কঠিন হ'য়ে থেকে মাত্র একুশ দিনের দিন লাভ করলেন তাঁর 'স্থিত মৃত্যুকে।' এমনি কোনো কারণেই দধীচি বুকের হাড় খুলে দিলেন, যাঁও চাসের চুষনে অন্ততব করলেন ক্রুশের জালা, সক্রোটস মুখে তুলে ধরলেন বিসপাত, গ্যালিলিয়ো ঝাঁপ খেলেন ভীষণ আগুনে—এবং আরো অনেক সমাস্তর দৃষ্টান্ত আমরা মুহূর্তে সাহিত্য ও ইতিহাস থেকে উদ্ধার ক'রে দিতে পারি; স্বেচ্ছামৃত্যু শুধু অসংগতই নয়, পাপ, এই মূল্যবোধটি যে এইসব ক্ষেত্রে কোনোই কাজ করেনি, এটা তো স্পষ্টই বোঝা যাচ্ছে। জীবনের মহিমাকে ঘোষণা করার সনাতন ও অন্তহীন উপায় হিশেবেই এ-সব ক্ষেত্রে মৃত্যুর অবতারণা ঘটেছে। কিন্তু কোনো মাজারাস যদি কবরখানা থেকে বেরিয়ে এসে খ্রীষ্টকে ব'লে বসে, 'কেন আমাকে তুমি বাঁচিয়ে দিলে, কেন তুমি ছিনিয়ে নিয়ে গেলে আমার মৃত্যু', অথবা কোনো কবি যখন ব'লে বসেন যে, 'একবার প্রকৃতির এজিয়ার থেকে বেরিয়ে যেতে পারলে আর-কোনোদিনই প্রাকৃতিক অবয়ব ফিরে চাইবো না', তখন আমরা স্তব্ধ হ'য়ে যাই। পুনরুজ্জীবনের সব আকাঙ্ক্ষা ডুবিয়ে কোনো প্রচণ্ড লেখক যখন তীব্রভাবে লুপ্তির জ্ঞান ইচ্ছাপ্রকাশ করেন, তখন আমাদের দৈনন্দিন জীবন ভয়ে ও বিস্ময়ে চকিতভাবে পিছনে হ'ঠে যায়, মনে হয় কোনো আগুনের পাহাড় থেকে যেন কোনো মৌল সমস্তার উপর ছড়িয়ে ছিটিয়ে গেলো উদ্ভারণ।

প্রকৃতি কখনো এই কথা বলে না; সুস্থ সে, দৃন্দহীন, স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত ও অনার্যাস—সেইজন্যই তো সে হ'লো স্বভাবের পৃথিবী, সব যেখানে বিধিবদ্ধ, দুই আর দুই যোগ ক'রে দিলে চার না-হ'য়ে যেখানে কোনো উপায় থাকে না। কিন্তু মানুষ যেহেতু যোগ-বিয়োগের কতগুলি সংখ্যা নয় সেইজন্য তাকে নিয়ে নাড়াচাড়া করলে অমোঘ ও অনিবার্যভাবে চিরকালই একই কলে পৌছনো যায় না—'হাজারবার, লক্ষবার একই কল বেরোলেও তার পরের বারে কী হবে কেউ বলতে পারে না।' অথচ স্বভাবের পৃথিবীতে ঠিক তার উল্টো—প্রতিটি ঘটনার পিছনে সেখানে কারণ থাকে,—কখনো এক, কখনো একাধিক। পৃথিবীতে যাদের স্বাভাবিক মানুষ বলি, তাদেরও কাজকর্ম নিয়ন্ত্রিত হয় কোনো-না-কোনো কারণ দ্বারা। কিন্তু এমন কোনো-কোনো লোক আছে, যাদের মুখোমুখি হ'লে সব নিয়ম ধ'সে প'ড়ে যায়। আর তখন, যখন আমাদের চিন্তাভাবনা অনেক চেষ্টা ক'রেও কোনো কারণকে খুঁজে পায় না, তখন হ'তে হয় অফুরান গোধূলি আর দীর্ঘ বাত্মি নিয়ে হতবাক ও ভারাতুর। (সিসিফাসের

আনন্দের ন্যায় অবিচল ঘূর্ণমানতাকে আঁকড়ে রাখে জড়ের ভগ্ন।
 তখনও বলা যায় পৃথিবী জড়ের ভগ্নই হয়তো জানে পুনরুত্থানের মন্ত্র—কেননা
 তখনও তার কিছু নেই, সে শুধু নিয়ম মেনে চলে। কিন্তু 'মাঠের সেই
 গাছের মতো তালোবাসে না নিজের ইচ্ছেটাকে কাজে খাটিতে চায়।' আ
 নন্দের বলা কখনো ম'রে তাকে প্রমাণ করতে হয় যে সে একদল বেঁচে ছিলে
 মাঠের গাছের মতো বেঁচে ছিলো, গোটা চরাচরে একমাত্র বেঁচে থাকা অনিয়মের
 সাপেক্ষে, তখনোই, তলপুয়ের সেই কথাগুলি মনে পড়া যাবাবিক যেখানে
 তলপুয়ের মতো মাঠের চরমতম সৌভাগ্য বলে মনে করেছিলো :

The possibility of killing one's self is a safety-valve.
 Having it, man has no right to say that life is unbearable.")

শুধু মাঠের গাছের মতো রবীন্দ্রনাথই বাংলা সাহিত্যে প্রথম এই অনিয়মের দিকে
 তালোবাসে দিতে দেখালেন আমাদের। সত্যি, তাঁর আগে বাংলা সাহিত্যে
 সাহিত্যিকতার বিদাহরণ ছিলো—এমনকি প্রথম বাংলা ঔপন্যাসিক বলে যায় দাবি
 শ্রীমতী বসন্তকুমারী প্রতাপ, সেই তাঁর একাধিক চরিত্রবিশিষ্টকল্পনায় আত্মহত্যা
 ঘটানো ছিলো। সেখানে তবু আমরা বুঝতে পারি কেন কুন্দনন্দিনীরা আত্মহত্যা
 করে তাদের তালোবাসা সেখানে ব্যর্থ হ'য়ে যায়, ধ'সে পড়ে আত্মা ও বিশ্বাস,
 মনোবীজ পৌছায় চরমে, শেষে ফুরিয়ে যায় বেঁচে থাকার লক্ষ্য ও মার্গত্বতা, তখন
 নিজের চোখে নিজের অবসান না-টেনে দিয়ে আর-কিছুই তাদের করার থাকে না।
 সাহিত্যিক নামক রহস্যময়—এবং প্রায় ক্ষেত্রেই বা দুর্বোধ হ'য়ে সম্প্রতি বাংলা
 সাহিত্যে চান্দা দিচ্ছে—ব্যাপারটি বহুবিধকল্পকেও আকর্ষণ করেছিলো, কিন্তু সাহিত্য-
 গম্যতার কল্পলোকে তখন বিষাদের স্থান থাকলেও অকারণ কোনো কর্মের স্থান
 ছিলো না। কেননা কালপ্রভাবেই তখন যুক্তির ও 'প্রতিপন্ন নিয়মের গানে' সারস্বত
 গম্যতার কিয়দকর্ষ মুখর হ'য়ে ছিলো। অকারণ আত্মহত্যা নামক ব্যাপারটি
 রবীন্দ্রনাথই প্রথম ঘটালেন, এবং 'তারকার আত্মহত্যা' 'সন্ধ্যাসংগীত' নামক এক
 কাব্যের মধ্য দিয়ে তিনি যে-ধারার সূচনা ক'রে গেলেন, উত্তরকালে সেই স্রোতেই
 গম্যগমের সম্ভার ব'য়ে নিয়ে গেলো আরো অনেক তরুণী, যার দাঁড়গুলি তাঁদেরই
 মতো গাঢ় হ'য়ে উঠেছে, উত্তর-রবীন্দ্র সাহিত্য-ভগ্নে যাদের নিয়ে আজকাল
 পাখরা গণ ক'রে থাকি।

অকারণে যে-তারটি ধ'সে প'ড়ে গেলো, তার এই মৃত্যুর কোনো কারণ

আমাদের সামনে তুলে ধরা হয়নি। ছোট্ট একটি সম্ভাবনার দিকে অবশ্য ক্ষীণ একটি ইঙ্গিত আছে, যার সার কথা হ'লো ঐ অলাতচক্রের জলন্ত আলোটুকু নাকি ছিলো তার যজ্ঞার ছদ্মবেশ; তাকে যে জলতে হচ্ছে এটা যাতে ভুলে যেতে পারে, সেইভাবেই নাকি সে তার চারধারে ঝলমলে আলো ছিটিয়ে দিতে। একটি নক্ষত্রের ভিতর তীব্রভাবে সঞ্চারিত ক'রে দেয়া হ'লো স্পন্দমান এক হুংপিও, সচেতন ও নিজের ইচ্ছায় আরক্ত; সে জলতে চায় না তবু কেন তাকে বাধ্য করা হ'লো দিনের পর দিন ধ'রে জলতে—এই নৃশংস বিধানের বিরোধিতা ক'রে পাগলের মতো সে ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়লো অন্ধকারের সমুদ্রে। অর্থাৎ এখানে যেন তলতলের সিঁদুলেরই প্রতিধ্বনি শোনা যায়

'Suicide is the supreme boon that God has bestowed on man among all the penalties of life.'

এই কথার মধ্যে কি এই গূঢ়ার্থটিই লুকিয়ে নেই, যা সরল বাংলায় এই রকম : জীবন মানেই শান্তি, জীবন মানেই চেতনার ভার, ওই কবিতার নক্ষত্রটির মতো অবিরাম অগ্নিবমন—ফলে, তার হাত থেকে উদ্ধার পাবার সরলতম ও সৌভাগ্যবান উপায় হ'লো আত্মহত্যা—ওই তারাটির মতোই কালো প্রাবনে ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়া।

আত্মহত্যা নামক ব্যাপারটি রবীন্দ্র সাহিত্যে নেহাৎ কম নেই। সমস্ত সরলীকরণকে ব্যর্থ ক'রে, এবং সমস্ত প্রচলিত সাহিত্যিক প্রসিদ্ধিকে অস্বীকার ক'রে, স্বয়ং রবীন্দ্রনাথই আছেন তাঁর সমস্ত সম্ভার নিয়ে, যেখানে অজস্র মৃত্যু ও আত্মহত্যা প্রতিনিয়ত ঘ'টে চলেছে। এমন একটি জগৎও মহাকবির দৃষ্টিপাতে ধরা পড়েছিলো যেখানে ম'রে প্রমাণ ক'রে দিতে হয় যে মরেনি। যেখানে হত্যার পরে বিচলিত ও বিকৃতমস্তিষ্ক বৃদ্ধ কেবল জাগ্রত এক বিবেক নিয়ে ঘুরে বেড়ায় আর বলে, 'ঐ ভনিতে পাইতেছ?' যেখানে অমূল্য, কিশোর, উত্তীয় নামক কিশোরেরা কেবলই স্বেচ্ছায় মৃত্যুর দিকে চ'লে যায়, আর সেই সব মৃত্যুর আঘাতে বিমলা, কি রাজা কি শ্রামা-বজ্রসেনের বিবেক হঠাৎ জাস্তব এক ক্ষুধা নিয়ে জেগে উঠে নিজেদের ছিঁড়ে দিতে থাকে। 'চতুরঙ্গ'র মধ্যে পর-পর কয়েক পাতার ব্যবধানে দু-দুটো আত্মহত্যা ঘ'টে যায়। 'ঘরে-বাইরে'র শেষ দৃশ্যে বিমলা কেবল বাজের তিতরকার পিতলটার কথা চিন্তা করে। 'চার অধ্যায়ে'র 'বিভীষিকার রক্তাক্ত কর্দ্দমের মধ্য থেকে তীব্র মত্ত শতদলের মৃণাল' আকাশে মুখ বাড়িয়ে দেয়, তাকেও খাঙ সংগ্রহ করতে হয় ঝুরি-নামা বটপাছের অন্ধকার তলায়, যেখানে দূরের থেকে হইশুলের শব্দ আসে অবসানের ভীষণসুন্দর সংকেত ক'রে। এমনি অজস্র উদাহরণ তুলে দিতে পারা যায়, যারা দলে ভারি ব'লে কখনোই মনে হয় না যে প্রক্ষিপ্ত, বরং এটা স্পষ্টই বুঝে নিতে

১০০ মতাকবির জগতে এরাও দলে-দলে এসেছে, এসে নিজেদের জায়গা নিয়ে
গাছে। পরবর্তীকালে জীবনানন্দের সেই আত্মহতা যে 'উটের গ্রীবার'
১০১ নিমজ্জতার গলায় মৃত্যুর ভীষণনিষ্ঠুর ডাক শুনেছিলো, তা যে কোনো
১০২ নানা দল আচপিত ব্যাপার নয়, সেটাই আমরা বুঝে নিতে পারি, যদি
১০৩ আমরা তা গনিবেশ যত্নসহকারে রবীন্দ্রনাথের দিকে নিবদ্ধ করি।

১০৪ 'চতুর্দশ'র পরেই যখন তিনি 'ঘরে-বাইরে' রচনা করলেন, তখন যে শেষ
১০৫ বিমলাকে কালো চকচকে একটি পিস্তলের কথা বারে-বারে মনে ক'রে
১০৬ উঠে যায়, তার কারণও কি এই নয় যে, সন্দীপের আবির্ভাবের পর বিমলা মনে-
১০৭ মনে মনে গেলো গ্রীসদেশের সেই মৃত্তিকবের কথা যিনি পাষাণের প্রতিমায় প্রাণ-
১০৮ প্রাণ ক'রে দিয়েছিলেন। স্বদেশের সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে নিজেকেও যে বিমলা পাষাণের
১০৯ প্রাণের সঙ্গে মিলিয়ে দিলে, তার কারণ কি এই নয় যে, সন্দীপের আবির্ভাবে
১১০ তার মন, সচেতন হ'লো তা, সক্রিয় হ'লো, ভ'রে গেলো দ্বন্দ্ব-
১১১ দ্বন্দ্ব, পাপ ও পুণ্যের টানাপোড়নে। সে মরলেই সব বিপদ কেটে যাবে, সে
১১২ পাপ থেকে থাকবে, সংসারকে তার পাপ নানাদিক থেকে মারতে থাকবে—এই
১১৩ গল্প কথা যে সে শেষ অধ্যায়ে তাবতে শুরু ক'রে দিলে, তার কারণ তো এটাই
১১৪ গণীপ তার মনকে নাড়া দিয়ে চাঁদ দিয়ে জাগিয়ে চ'লে গেলো। এর পরে
১১৫ তার প্রণের ঘরকন্নার সিঁধে ও বাঁধা পথ চিরকালের মতো ভারি ও কালো একটি
১১৬ গদায় ঢেকে গেলো, আর যে তাব পক্ষে নিবন্ধ ও স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত জীবনধারণ করে
১১৭ থাকার সম্ভব নয়, ছোট্ট একটি পিস্তলের উল্লেখ ক'রেই রবীন্দ্রনাথ সে-কথা ইঙ্গিতে
১১৮ ফুটিয়ে তুললেন। পরবর্তীকালের লেখকগণ তা করেননি : জগদীশ গুপ্তর সিদ্ধার্থ
১১৯ পরাসরি ব'লে দিয়ে যায় যে সিদ্ধার্থ আর বেঁচে নেই, 'দিবারাত্রির কাব্যে'
১২০ শানন্দ কাঁপিয়ে পড়ে ভীষণ আগুনের কুণ্ডে, 'নির্জন স্বাক্ষরে'র সোমেন চুমুক
১২১ দিয়ে নিঃশেষ ক'রে ফ্যালে বিষের গেলাশ, আর 'অহুপম জীবিতী'কে 'জড় আঁঠু
১২২ থলুড়ের ডায়ালেকটিক' বেশি জ্বরে চাঁদ দিয়ে উপড়ে ফ্যালে। কিন্তু রচনার
১২৩ গণীপনাথকে মেনে না-নিয়ে সম্ভবত কোনো উপায় নেই।

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১২৫ এটি কারণেই উপায় নেই যে, রবীন্দ্রনাথের চরিত্রের যখন স্বেচ্ছামৃত্যু বরণ
১২৬ করে, তখন তাদের সেই কাজের পিছনে এমন এক তীব্র চাপ থাকে, যা
১২৭ শব্দচক্র বা তাঁর অহুসারী লেখকদের মতো তেমন একস্তর বা কেনারিত নয়
১২৮ দেবদাস প্রেমে বার্থ হ'য়ে ক্রমশ বোহেমিয়ান ও উচ্ছাসবিলাসী যুবকের মতো

নিজের ধ্বংস ঘটিয়ে দিলে, 'গৃহদাহ'র সুরেশ শুধু সেই উচ্ছ্বাস থেকে আর্থনিকটা দূরে মাত্র অবস্থিত—কিন্তু হৃজনেরই শিরার ভিতর রক্তের যে-ধারা ব'য়ে চলেছে, তা একই রকম। যেমনভাবে রোজ খবরের কাগজের পাতা খুললে বার্থ প্রেমের জন্ত কিংবা পরীক্ষায় বার্থতার জন্ত আত্মহত্যার খবর পাওয়া যায়, শরৎচন্দ্র এবং তাঁর দ্বারা প্রভাবিত লেখকেরা শুধু সেই জাতীয় আত্মহত্যাকেই দৃষ্টে সহানুভূতির সঙ্গে বিবেচনা করেছেন। কোনো নিপুণ ও চতুর নাগরিক কবি কেবল তাদের নিয়ে একটি সপ্রতিভ কবিতায় কিছুটা সমবেদনা দেখাতে পারেন, কিন্তু এর ভিতর সেই অনিয়মের সাক্ষাৎ নেই, যা কোনো সাধারণ ব্যাপ্যায় ধরা পড়ে না ব'লেই আধুনিক লেখকদের কাছে এত বেশি আকর্ষণের বিষয়। হতাশা, অনাস্থা, ব্যর্থতা এই সব জিনিশ যখন বেঁচে থাকার সমস্ত মাধ্যমে উপড়ে ফ্যালে, তখন আমরা কিছুটা বুঝি। যে-বিপুল মোহভঙ্গ বিপ্লবের পরে রুশদেশের বহু প্রচণ্ড লেখককে আত্মহত্যায় উদ্বুদ্ধ করেছিলো, সেই শোকান্তিক মনস্তাপ ও খেদকেও আমরা কোনোমতে আনন্দ করতে পারি। কিন্তু 'পুতুল নাচের ইতিকথা'র সেই ভীষণ নিষ্ঠুর নিরীশ্বর আত্মহত্যার মূণোমুখি হ'লেই কোনো বুদ্ধিগ্রাহ্য ব্যাপ্যায় কুলোয় না ব'লে আমাদের চূপ ক'রে যেতে হয়। তখনই আমরা অস্বস্তি করতে পারি যে লেখক আমাদের কতগুলি মৌল বোধকে সাঁড়াশির মতো ভীষণভাবে আঁকড়ে ধ'রে টান দিলেন। দেশের জন্ত, আদর্শের জন্ত প্রাণ-বিসর্জনকে আমরা কখনো বৈনাশিক বলি না, বরং আত্মত্যাগ ব'লে জয়গানে মূগর হই। আত্মহত্যা নামক ব্যাপ্যারটি এই কারণেই এতটা নিদারুণ যে তা প্রাণের অপচয়, ক্ষয় বলতে যা বোঝায়, ঠিক তা-ই। যাদব আর তার স্ত্রী কেন আত্মহত্যা করলো, এই চিন্তা পাঠকদের একেবারে বিপর্যস্ত ক'রে ফ্যালে। স্বয়ং মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, যার লেখায় আত্মহত্যা প্রায়ই ঘুরে-দুকে আসে, যিনি 'আত্মহত্যার অধিকার'কে প্রতিষ্ঠিত ক'রে দিয়ে গেছেন, তিনি পর্যন্ত আর-কোথাও এত অকারণ আত্মহত্যার অবতারণা করেন নি। 'দিবারাত্রির কাব্যে' আনন্দ তো অনেক আগেই মারা গিয়েছিলো, শুধু চিতায় ওঠবার শক্তিটুকুই তার বজায় ছিলো। কেন মরেছিলো সে? না তার প্রেম চিরকাল টিকেছিলো। যা শেষকালে প্রাণ নিয়ে তবে ক্ষান্ত হয়। তাই প্রথম যখন আনন্দের আবির্ভাব হয়েছিলো, তখন যে-নাচ সে নেচে এসেছিলো, ঠিক সেই নাচই শুরু হ'লো আবার, নিরাবরণ নিরাভরণ হ'য়ে সে এমন এক নৃত্য প্রদর্শন করলে, যার অস্ত্র নাম হ'লো মৃত্যু হীন প্রেম, অভিজ্ঞ পরিণত ও বয়স্ক ব'লে হেরষ যা করলো ক'রে উঠতে পারেনি। ধীরে-ধীরে তার নাচের ভিতর দিয়ে যা প্রকাশ হ'লো তা তীব্র একটি

এই দিন স্বপ্ন দিকে পম্পারিত তার হাত—আর ক্রমশ যখন তার পরিপূর্ণ
 তার হাতের নখর চোপের সামনে ফুটে উঠলো, তখন হেরথ তাকে চিনে নিতে
 পারেন। তার আশা কক অশ্রুভিত্তির স্বাদে সে ভরে গেলো, যার ভিতর জন্ম মৃত্যু
 এই দুইটি শব্দকে একে সমার্থক হয়ে গেলো, একটা মিশে গেলো অশ্রুটির
 সাথে মিশে গেলো। দিগে যোগাযোগ ঘটলো, এদের মধ্যে সম্ভব হয়ে উঠলো
 নিঃসঙ্গা। নিঃসঙ্গা। কিন্তু যাদবের এই সঙ্গীক আত্মহত্যা—একে আমরা কী
 বলায়? নিঃসঙ্গা। শরীর মতো নিষ্ক্রিয়ভাবে আমরাও তাকিয়ে-তাকিয়ে
 দেখছি। আমরা এঁদের আশ্রিতের ক্রিয়ায় প্রাণবন্ত দুটি ছুপিও নেতিয়ে গেলো, ধীরে-
 ধীরে তারা নিঃসঙ্গ হয়ে গেলো হুঁজনে, আরো খানিকক্ষণ পরে শরীর দিকে
 ছাড়া ছাড়া মেয়ে তাকিয়ে যাদব এক অদ্ভুত হাসি হেসে গেলেন, আর তার পরে
 তার মনে মনে চোপের সাথে আর কালিমায়, চোপের তারা দুটি বিন্দুর মতো সংকুচিত
 হয়ে গেলো, মূগে উঠে এলো বিষের ফেনা। মাটির টিলার উপরে উঠে সূর্যাস্তের লাল
 দিগন্তের দেখবার শপ কেন যে শরীর আর কোনোদিনই হবে না ধীরে-ধীরে আমাদের
 চোপের মাঝে মাঝে চলে যায়। এই আত্মহত্যার ফল তো কেবল দুটি মাত্র প্রাণের
 নিঃসঙ্গা করে দেয়। হলে না, শিউরোতে-থাকা শরীর গলা টিপে ধরে তাই
 নিঃসঙ্গার মতো দমবন্ধ এক অস্বস্তির ভিতর নিয়ে এলো। পৃথিবীর সাহিত্যে এই
 দুইটি আত্মহত্যার সমান্তর কোনো ঘটনা আছে কিনা সন্দেহ। দস্তয়েভস্কি
 'কিয়ারাঙ্কল' শব্দগণের কাহিনীতে সেই হস্তারক জারজপুত্র যখন আত্মহত্যা
 করলো, তখন অস্ত্রত পুনরায় সে ঈশ্বরে আত্মা পেয়েছিলো। পাপ এবং পুণ্য—এই
 দুটি বাদের চেতনা দিগে আদার পরেই তাকে আত্মহত্যা করতে হয়েছিলো, তার
 আশ্রয় নেই। সেই পিতৃহস্তার জন্ত আর কিছু না-থাক, অসীম পর্যন্ত এক করুণার সাগর
 ঝড়েরে দেখা হয়েছিলো। আলবোর কামুর উপন্যাসে সেই আজীবন ধরে প্রাণ
 বাঁচানোর সংশোধনকারী লেখকটি আত্মহত্যা করলেন কেবল সিসিফাসের অবিরাম
 কামর থেকে নিষ্কৃতি পাওয়ার জন্ত। কিন্তু যাদব এবং তাঁর স্ত্রীর জন্ত কিছুই ছিলো
 না। নিষ্কৃতিও পেলে না তারা, এবং যেখানে গিয়ে পড়লেন, সেই শূন্যতা নিরীশ্বর
 বসন্তের নাজের তাত থেকেও সেখানে উদ্ধার নেই। জীবনানন্দ দাশের সমুদ্র 'নীল মরু
 ভূমির' মতো জায়গায়, কিন্তু মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় তাঁর পৃথিবী থেকে সমস্ত সম্ভব
 সম্ভব ক'রে নিলেন শেক্সপীরের টাইমস মাস্টারের বিবেকহীন গুরুত্ব ও অকৃতজ্ঞতা
 করে। জীবন হয়ে উঠে সূর্যকে একদিন যে-অস্বরোধ করেছিলো, তাই যেন ধরে
 নেওয়া যত কাল পরে, দিগে যেন এইবার এই নিরীশ্বর ও নির্বিবেক জগৎসংসার থেকে
 সমস্ত পাঠ্য সংশোধন করে নিলো সূর্য। কিছুই রইলো না আর্দ্র, সব শুবে নিয়ে যাওয়া

য়েছে অগস্ত্যের মতো এক গুণ্ডে, আর তারই ভিতর দিয়ে কাঁপশাভাবে সংগোপনে ধকধক ক'রে উঠছে 'চতুরঙ্গ'র সেই বালির চড়া, যার শাদা, ধূ-ধূ ও ক্ষুধাতুর বিস্তারে কেবল কতগুলি উধাও পাখির পায়ের ছাপ প'ড়ে আছে—তাছাড়া আর-কিছুই নেই। এই হিংস্র, আমিষগন্ধী, খ্যাতলানো হাড়ের গুঁড়োর মতো বালি ধীরে-ধীরে গোটা পৃথিবীকে গ্রাস ক'রে নেয়, শুকিয়ে ফালে প্রেম, মেরে ফালে প্রাণের সব আকাজ্জা, জীবনের সব ছোটো-ছোটো সুখদুঃখ যা নিয়ে মানুষ বাঁচে, যা নিয়ে—জীবনের মোল প্রতিচার সবেও—সে বাঁচতে চায়। জীবনানন্দের নাটক এক টুকরো দড়ি হাতে নিয়েছিলো কেবলমাত্র এই কারণে যে চিরকালই জড়ের জীবন তার কাছে দুর্লভ থেকে যাবে—মানিক বন্দোপাধ্যায় সেই জড়ের জীবন জোর ক'রে তার সব কাঁটা আর খোঁচা নিয়ে শশীর বৃকের ভিতর ঠেঁশে ঢুকিয়ে দিলেন, যেন মস্ত এক ফণিমনসার গাছ তার হৃৎপিণ্ডে জোর ক'রে ভ'রে দেয়া হ'লো। ভগদীশ গুপ্তর কাছ থেকে মানিক বন্দোপাধ্যায় যে-নিষ্পৃহতা অর্জন করেছিলেন, শুধুমাত্র তারই জোরে এই মারাত্মক পৃথিবীকে তিনি গ'ড়ে তুলতে পেরেছিলেন; যদি এই ভগতের সঙ্গে তাঁর নিজের কোনো ব্যবধান না থাকতো, তাহ'লে অচিরেই শশীর মতো তাকেও এই আত্মহত্যা ও হত্যায় বাসরোধী, বিকলাঙ্গ ও বিকৃত পৃথিবীকে মেনে নিতে হ'তো। যে-‘ধারাবাহিক অন্ধকার’ মাতৃগর্ভ থেকে সংগ্রহ ক'রে তাঁর গল্প-উপন্যাসের প্রচণ্ড চরিত্রগুলি জন্ম নেয়, সেই অন্ধকার তারা সন্তানের মাংসল প্রাণেই ভিতর গোপন ক'রে রেখে যাবে। সেই অন্ধকার—তাঁর মতে—প্রাগৈতিহাসিক, পৃথিবীর আলো আজ পর্যন্ত তার নাগাল পায়নি, এবং কোনোদিন পাবেও না—এই তাঁর একটি বিখ্যাত গল্পের শেষ কথা। কিন্তু যতক্ষণ পর্যন্ত তাঁর শশীরা নিজিয় না-হয়, অন্তত ততদিন পর্যন্ত তারা টিলার উপরে উঠে ‘স্বর্ঘ্যাস্তের রঙিন বিস্মরণের দিকে তাকাবে—শুধু এই একটি ইঁপ ছাড়ার জায়গা তিনি আমাদের জন্ম রেখে গেছেন। না-হ'লে এমন লোকও তাঁর জগতে আছে যে অল্পপূর্ণার অক্ষুরন্ত ভাঙারে থেকেও উপবাসী, পকাশ মাইল গভীর রাষ্ট্রের ডুবে থেকেও যার নিশ্বাস প্রতি মুহূর্তে বন্ধ হ'য়ে আসতে চায়, সেখানে এমন লোক আছে যে শাঁ-শাঁ শব্দ ক'রে গলহীন হ'কোয় তামাক টাঙ্গার মতো গোটা জীবনকে শুষে নিতে চায়। যে-নাস্তিক উত্তরে হাওয়া যাদবদের আত্মহত্যা ছড়িয়ে দিয়ে গেলো, যে-হাওয়া কেবল প্রাণকে শুকিয়ে খোশার মতো কেলে রেখে যায়, সেই হাওয়ায় অনেকেই যে আর নিশ্বাস নিতে পারবে না, এটা তো জানা কথা। আর তাই তাঁর গল্পে যখন খর্বকায়া স্ত্রী কড়িকাঠে দড়ি বেঁধে ঝুলে পড়ে, তখন তার স্বামী শুধু একটি ভাবনাতেই অস্থির হ'য়ে যায়, এত উচুতে উঠে তার স্ত্রী দড়ির ফাঁস ছড়ালো কী ক'বে? কিংবা নারী-ধর্ষক ও

স্বাভাবিকতা রীতিমত আদর ও কথাবার্তা শুনে-শুনেই নিজে
নিজের গলায় নিয়ে নেয়। অল্পান্ত ক্ষেত্রে সহজেই আমরা বুঝে
যাই যে সেখানে কোনো একটা উট যে চাঁদ ডুবো যাবার পর
আমরা মনে জানি তার ভিতর দিয়ে গলা বাড়িয়ে দেয়। কিন্তু
সবচেয়ে আশ্চর্য্যজনক হলো তীব্র গরল নিয়ে কোনো-কোনো মুহূর্তে
এমন সব কিছু ঘটে যাওয়া যে না সব ব্যর্থ হয়; ঈর্ষা, অনুয়া, হতাশা, ব্যর্থতার
এমন সব কিছু আমাদের ছাপনকে শিশি-বাতলগুলি চুরমাংর হ'য়ে পড়ে যেতে
পারে যে মাংস খাদ্য কোনো কালেও নামহীন বৃত্তি, যা সব কর্ম্মলা ও তব-
স্বাভাবিকতা রীতিমত আদর কেই নতুন করে প্রতিষ্ঠিত করে যায়। দন্তুয়েতসি
এমন সব কিছু ঘটে যাওয়া থেকে নিবাসিত করে পাতালে পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন,
এমন সব কিছু ঘটে যাওয়া থেকে এক গত্ত থেকে একজন সম্পূর্ণ একলা লোক টেঁচিয়ে গোটা
এমন সব কিছু ঘটে যাওয়া থেকে দাঁড় করিয়েছিলো—পরিশেষে তো অতিশয় স্পষ্ট : একা
এমন সব কিছু আর, তার অগ্নিদিকে আস্ত পৃথিবী—দলে ভারি তার বিরোধীরা, কাজেই
এমন সব কিছু থাকে যে দুমড়ে মুচড়ে তুবড়ে যেতে হবে, এটা তো জানা কথা। কিন্তু
এমন সব কিছু থাকে যে এটি সব লোক বেরিয়ে আসে, যারা নিজের দেখিয়ে কেবল বলে, আমরা
যারা এখানে এসে আছি আমরাও একা নই। অনেকে আছে আমাদের দলে, যারা
বাঁধাঘাট, আগছক মাঠ, যারা রাতিক্রম, যারা নিয়মের বহির্ভূত, যারা কোনো
কথালায় পড়ে না। যদিও যে-জন্ম আত্মহত্যা করলে, সে স্পষ্ট জানে তা মিথ্যে;
কোনো মোত তার ছিলো না, এমনকি তার সম্ভান চিন্তা কখনো ভুলেও এমন
দায়িত্ব প্রকাশ করেনি যে এর দ্বারা শরীকে দলে টানা যাবে; তবু মুক্তির পথ থাকা
গাঢ় সে মেনে নিলে নাতির অঙ্ককার—আর তার প্রবল আঘাতে সারা গ্রামস্থ
লোক সাগলের মতো হৈ-চৈ শুরু করে দিলো। আড়ালে কোনো ডাকিনীর
খাপই লক্ষ করা যায় না কি—‘হলুদ-পোড়া’ নামক তীব্র গরলটি যে-অতিপ্রাকৃতের
বাক্যনাট্য চইটুখুর। সরগুলি শিকড় যেন কেউ টান মেয়ে হিঁড়ে ফেললে—সু
একটি খেলাল ও দুর্বল মুহূর্তে উচ্চারণ করে কোলা কোনো উক্তি টেকিয়ে রাখার
কথা ‘সাণের এমন নির্দারুণ অপচয় বিশ্বসাহিত্যেও হয়তো আর নেই।’ আর তাই
এখনো তা কি অস্বাভাবিক? তা তো নয়, বরং মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের পরম
নাগিনতা ধীরে-ধীরে স্বাভাবিকতার পরাকাষ্ঠায় টেনে নিয়ে যায় তাকে, যেখান
থেকে অন্য-কোনো আদি ও প্রাগৈতিহাসিক জগতের ভুতুড়ে চন্দ্রালোক এসে
পড়ে এবং আমরা ধীরে-ধীরে কিসে যাই সেই প্রচণ্ড অগ্নিবমনের সময়ে, যখন

‘পৃথিবী’ নামক ছোট্ট গ্রহটিও জীবকূলের বাসোপযোগী হয়নি, তাপে ও গলমান ধাতুপিণ্ডে তা ভরা, সমস্ত বিশ্বেরই তখন শেন তৈরি হ’তে দেরি আছে—শুধু আছে ব্রহ্মাণ্ড-জোড়া এক ভঠর, যার স্পন্দমান নাড়িভূঁড়ির নাগপাশে সমস্ত খাণ্ডবস্ত্র বীরে-ধীরে প’চে গ’লে কিমাকার হ’য়ে যাচ্ছে। মানিক বন্দোপাধ্যায় যেন ঈশ্বরের কাছে তাঁর পৃথিবীকে ছুঁড়ে দিয়ে বললেন, ‘জাখো, তুমি কী বানিয়েছো। তোমার এই কদাকার ও অসম্পূর্ণ সৃষ্টির দিকে তাকিয়ে জাখো কেবল একবার, তারপরে দেখি পরম ও হুঃসহ লজ্জায় তুমি অধোবদন হও কিনা।’ তাঁর গল্পে যদি সব পশু গিয়ে মানুষ নামক জন্তুদের ত্যাগ ক’রে সুন্দরবনে গিয়ে আশ্রয় নিয়ে থাকে, তাহ’লে এই কথাগুলো ও যে তাঁর পক্ষে বলা অসম্ভব ছিলো না তা তো স্পষ্টই প্রতীয়মান হয়।

কিন্তু যে-সব জন্তু মানুষ ব’লেই জনপদে থেকে যায়, তারা তাহ’লে কী করবে? তারা ছুটবে কাজের টানে, স্বকুমার রায়ের সেই বিখ্যাত ‘খুড়োর কল’ তাদের টেনে নিয়ে যাবে চেষ্টার কুটিল গলিতে, নিয়মের আরামের আশ্রয়ে, জীবিকার ছুতোয় কোনো রকমে দিনটা কাটিয়ে দেবার স্বথের প্রলোভনে। ‘কোথাও যাবে না তারা, সকলেই থাকবে গলিতে,’ কানা গলি, অন্ধ, বাঁকা, কঠিন, কালো, নির্দম। আর থাকবে অবিরল ট্র্যাফিক, অবিচল বন্ধপরিকর জনস্রোত কেউ হেঁটে, কেউ মন্থণ গাড়িতে, ট্রামে-বাসে ঝুলে, ‘মোক্ষের পিল আর ভাস্কর্যের গুম্বুধ’ হাতে ক’রে ছিমছাম ও নিশ্চিন্ত, বাচার দায়িত্ব ও চেতনার ক্ষমাহীন ভার ভুলে গিয়ে নিশ্চিন্ত। কিন্তু ধরা যাক, এমন কারো কথা যে একেবারে নিশ্চিন্ত হ’তে পারলো না। যে স্রোতের মুখে ঝড় না-হ’য়ে তীব্র জ্যাস্ত মীনশরীর নিয়ে উজ্জানে ফিরতে চাইলো, সে কী করবে? সে থাকবে অতৃপ্তিতে ভারাতুর, হুঙ্কার ও পাপবোধ তাকে আচ্ছন্ন ক’রে থাকবে ব’লে আত্মনিগ্রহে ভারাক্রান্ত। ক্ষমাহীন ও ক্ষুরশান বিবেক থাকবে তার, যা কেবল পেঁচিয়ে-পেঁচিয়ে কাটবে তাকে। আর যেহেতু এই পৃথিবীকে বদলাবার ক্ষমতা তার নেই, কেননা তাহ’লে তাকে লড়াই করতে হয় এমন এক পরাজাস্ত ও নিরুপাধিক শক্তির সঙ্গে যার নাম ঈশ্বর, সেইজন্তু অবশেষে তাকে মেনে নিতেই হবে আত্মহননের উপায়। এমনকি, জন্ম থেকে এমন-এক বিশেষ ক্রিয়ায় তার ভিতর পচন ধ’রে যাবে যে নিজেকে পর্যন্ত গ’ড়ে তোলার ক্ষমতা তার থাকবে না।

ঠিক এই কথাই বলেছেন জগদীশ গুপ্ত, তাঁর ‘অসাধু সিদ্ধার্থ’ নামক উপন্যাসে।

চর

এক ছিলো যুবক; তার নাম নটবর, নিরলংকার নটবর, কোনো পদবি নেই, কেউ বিশেষ জোর করলে সে শুধু বিনীতভাবে দাস শব্দটি জুড়ে দেয় নামের শেষে, কিন্তু

অনেকদিন থেকেই সে সিদ্ধার্থ নামে চ'লে আসছে এবং তাও বেশ অবাধেই। সিদ্ধার্থকে নাগপাশের মতো জড়িয়ে রেখেছে একদল লোক—জাল জোচ্চুরি কপটতা তাদের কাছে জলভাত; একদিক থেকে সিদ্ধার্থর সঙ্গে তাদের কোনো ভেদ নেই, কেননা সেও ভ'রে আছে গোপনচারিতায়। গোপন ক'রে রেখেছে আত্মপরিচয়, সে যে আসলে নটবর এটা সে কাউকে প্রকাশ করে না। কিন্তু সিদ্ধার্থ নিজেকে নিয়ে মোটেই তৃপ্ত নয়—দুষ্কৃতি ও পাপবোধ তাকে আচ্ছন্ন ক'রে রেখেছে ব'লে আত্মনিগ্রহে সে তারাক্রান্ত—ভিতরে-ভিতরে অনেকদিন থেকেই 'অগ্নিগিরির অগ্নিবমন' শুরু হ'য়ে গেছে। তার ছিলো সবই, কিন্তু ছিলো না কেবল সেই জ্বিনিশ যার কোনো সংজ্ঞার্থ নেই, যার স্বরূপ ব'লে বোঝানো যায় না; 'উজ্জ্বল যার দ্বারা সকল হয়, যার সাহায্যে বড়ো আরো-বড়ো হয়, ছোটো ধীরে-ধীরে উন্নতির শিখরে আরোহণ করে, সেই পরাক্রান্ত ও সংক্রামক জ্বিনিশটিই তার ছিলো না। তাকে অদৃষ্ট বলা চলবে না, দৈব সে নয়, পুরুষকারও নয়—বরং সব কিছুই মিশোল, এবং তার সঙ্গে যুক্ত নিক্রপাধিক অজ্ঞাত একটি বস্তু।' যা তার আছে তা হ'লো মানুষের সবচেয়ে বিপজ্জনক সম্পত্তি ও বিপন্ন অধিকার—মানুষ যার নাম দিয়েছে মন।

বাংলাদেশের বোধহয় এই প্রথম উপন্যাস যার নায়ক আসলে একজন অপনায়ক, অসাধু কপট ও দুক্ৰিয়, কিন্তু সব অসাধুতা সত্ত্বেও—নগুর্থকভাবে—শেষ ইস্তক সে সাধক ও শহিদ হ'য়ে ওঠে। প্রচলনির্ভর উপন্যাসের সমস্ত ধারণাকে ভেঙে কেলে হিংস্র একটি প্রাসাদ গ'ড়ে উঠেছে, আশু-আশু যার ভিতর দমবদ্ধ স্বাভাবিকতা এক অসাধারণ অধিজ্যাতার চাপে টান-টান হ'য়ে ওঠে, এবং ছিলা কঁপে ওঠে মাঝে-মাঝে দিয়ে ওঠে টংকার, সকল হতাশা ও ব্যাধির মধ্যে শূন্যতাকে ধ্বনিত-প্রতিধ্বনিত ক'রে তোলে, আর সেই নয় নিষ্ঠুরতার ভিতর, দিগন্ত পেরিয়ে অস্ত্র আকাশ থেকে, আলো এসে পড়ে। না-প'ড়ে কোনো উপায় থাকে না; কেননা সিদ্ধার্থর কাছ থেকে সব কিছুই পালিয়ে গেছে, সঙ্গে আছে কেবলমাত্র শয়তান, কল্পনাহীন নির্মম ও আতঙ্ক-ভরা। বহুদিনের প্রিয় ইচ্ছাটিকে আড়াল ক'রে শয়তান তার মুখোমুখি দাঁড়িয়ে আছে তার ছর্ব্বার প্রলোভন নিয়ে। সেই শয়তান কে? পাঠক এই জিজ্ঞাসা ক'রে ওঠার সঙ্গে-সঙ্গেই দেখতে পাবেন, সিদ্ধার্থর হাতের কাছে একটি আয়না প'ড়ে ছিলো; হঠাৎ সেটি তুলে নিয়ে নিজের মুখের সামনে সে অনেকক্ষণ ধ'রে রেখে দিলে। আর তারপর ধীরে-ধীরে অনিবার্যভাবে তার মনে হ'লো—এ-কথা মনে পড়তেই হবে তার—এই মুখটিকে লুকিয়ে রাখার কোনো স্থান তার নেই। কিন্তু তবু সে পলায়ন করলে। চ'লে এলো একটি পার্বত্য জলপ্রপাতের খাদের ধারে, 'যেখানে প্রপাতের খরশ্রোত লুকিয়ে-লুকিয়ে নেমে যাচ্ছে অতল এক অন্ধকারে, ক্রুদ্ধ আহ্বান-গর্জনের

মতো বিরতিহীন তার শব্দ, আর উৎক্লিষ্ট চূর্ণজলের প্রতিকণায় ইন্দ্রধনুর সবগুলি রঙ ফল হ'য়ে ফুটে উঠেই ভেঙে-ভেঙে প'ড়ে যাচ্ছে।'

বলাই বাহুল্য, নিজের হাত থেকে পালাবার কোনো উপায়ই নেই তার—সে যেখানেই থাক তাকে এড়িয়ে সে যাবে কোথায়, তার স্বতিকে? কাছেই সিদ্ধার্থর মনে হ'তে লাগলো সে যেন গলিত কর্দমকুণ্ডের কুমি, মানুষের পাদস্পর্শের যোগা সে নয়। 'কোথাও একটু দুর্বলতার ফাঁক ছিলো, তারই সুযোগ নিয়ে বিশ্বজ্ঞাও তাকে তুলিয়ে ফুশলিয়ে প্রবঞ্চক ইতর দিকভ্রান্ত' মাজিয়েছে।

কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত সেই অন্ধকার খাদের দিকে ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়তে গিয়ে সে থমকে থেমে গেলো। মৃত্যু হয়তো তাকে বাঁচাতে পারতো—কিন্তু মৃত্যু তার হ'লো না, বিশ্ব তার কাছে লোভনীয় ব'লে মনে হ'লো, মানুষ প্রকৃতি সংসার সব কিছু তাকে টান দিলে—মরবার ঠিক আগের মুহূর্তে তাকে সে দেখতে পেলো। তাকে—অর্থাৎ একটি নারীকে।

সিদ্ধার্থ তারপর সেই অপরিচিতার সঙ্গে পরিচিত হবার জন্তে নানারকম ফন্দি-ফিকিরের অবতারণা করলে—একটি বেনামি চিঠিও সে ছুঁড়ে দিয়েছিলো, যার মধ্যে হীনমন্ত্রতার চিহ্ন আরো স্পষ্ট; চাতুরী দ্বারা, কপটতার সাহায্যে, সে অপরিচিতাকে তার দিকে আকৃষ্ট করলে; নিজের সম্বন্ধে ঘে-বিবরণ দিলে তা হ'লো যথেষ্ট শিক্ষিত ও ধনবান হওয়া সবেও সে দেশের জন্ত সব ছেড়ে ছুড়ে পথে বেরিয়েছে, মানবসেবা ও দেশসেবার প্রেরণাই তাকে ঘর থেকে টেনে বেব ক'রে এনেছে, জন্ম তার অভিজাত বংশে, এবং তার সাধুতা এবং গুণপনারও কোনো শেষ নেই। পাঠক মনে রাখবেন নিজের এই সাধু ও আদর্শবাদী মূর্তি আকার জন্ত তার যত্ণার বিরাম ছিলো না: একমাত্র যেখানে তার সততা ও অকপটতা সবচেয়ে বেশি জরুরি ছিলো, সেখানেও এক অলীক মহামানবকে সে আমদানি না-ক'রে পারে নি; কিন্তু তাকে যে তিল-তিল—ক'রে এই অনৃতমূর্তি গড়তে হ'লো, মেয়েটির কাছাকাছি আসার জন্ত তাকে যে মিথ্যার আশ্রয় নিতে হ'লো, তা তাকে প্রতিনিয়ত ক্ষতবিক্ষত করে; কিন্তু সেই মিথ্যে মূর্তি, এই অমূল কল্পনা আসলে তার সেই মূর্তি, যা সে হ'তে চায়। তবু সত্য কথাটি এই যে, যা সে হ'য়ে আছে তা এক কদাকার ও কিম্বতমূর্তি। তার প্রিয়জন যেমন তিল-তিল ক'রে তাকে একটি কাল্পনিক মহত্ত্ব গ'ড়ে তুলতে বাধ্য করলো—নিশ্চয় সেই মূর্তি, পাথরের মতো নিঃসাড়, কেননা সে রক্তমাংসে স্পন্দিত নয়—তেমনি সেই ভালোবাসাই তাকে বাধ্য করলে আবার একটা চরম দুষ্কৃতি ও অসাধুতার আশ্রয় নিতে। তার জীবনের সবচেয়ে বড়ো অভিজ্ঞতার ভিতর এই স্ববিরোধ লক্ষ করার মতো। কেননা যখন ভালোবাসা তাকে ধীরে-ধীরে আচ্ছন্ন করছে, তখন থেকে তার যত্ণা আরো তীব্র ও অসহ্য হ'য়ে উঠতে শুরু করছে। প্রথম দিকে

অজয়ার কাছে এগিয়ে তার অস্বস্তি লাগতো, শেষ দিকে সেটা থাকলো না; যতক্ষণ সে অজয়ার কাছাকাছি থাকে, ততক্ষণ একটা আশ্রয় পায় বরং, নিজের ভিতরে সে ফুটে উঠতে থাকে ততক্ষণ, কিন্তু ছাড়াছাড়ি হ'তেই তার মনে হয় যেন 'অতিশয় গুরুত্ব' এক দৈব নিধাতন' তার দিকে গুঁড়ি মেরে এগিয়ে আসছে, আর 'বহুদূর থেকে নিকৃষ্ট বিযাক্ত কুশাস্করের' মতো তারই জ্বালা তার অস্থিমজ্জায় ফুটে যাচ্ছে। একদিন—অজয়ার সঙ্গে তার বিয়ে ঠিক হবার পর—সে আর অজয়া পিসিমাকে প্রণাম করতে গিয়েছিলো; পিসিমা ছুজনের অক্ষয় স্তম্ভের কামনা করেছিলেন, অজয়ার মুখের উপর বশিষ্ঠলা দিগন্ত থেকে সুন্দর আলো এসে পড়েছিলো। কিন্তু সেই মুহূর্তটিকে সিদ্ধার্থ সহ্য করতে পাবেনি, স'রে গিয়ে মুখ কিবিয়ে দাঁড়িয়েছিলো।

আয়নায় মুখ দেখতে-দেখতে রাগে ক্ষোভে অসহায় আক্রোশে তাকে ফুলে উঠতে হয়। এমন সময়ে আবার সে পালাবার জ্ঞান সংকল্প নিলে—কিন্তু এবার তার সব মনোবল ও সম্বল বিলুপ্ত। দেনা আর ক্ষুধা একপাল কুকুরের মতো তার পিছন পিছন আছে। তারপর সে স্বপ্ন দেখলো: শ্মশানে চিতা জ্বলছে, চিতার আগুনে ধোঁয়া নেই; কিন্তু তার অবিশ্রান্ত নো-নো শব্দ শুক্ক নিবিড় অন্ধকারের ভিতর দিয়ে একটি তরল স্রোতের মতো ঢেউ তুলে-তুলে ব'য়ে চলেছে। চিতায় শায়িত মৃতদেহটি হঠাৎ পুড়তে-পুড়তে উঠে ব'সে ধীরে-ধীরে মাটির উপর পা রেখে নেমে দাঁড়ালো, বেরিয়ে এলো লেলিহান নির্ধূম আগুন থেকে, নিনিমেষ তার চোপ, এসে সে সিদ্ধার্থর সামনে দাঁড়িয়ে জিগেস করলে,

'চিনতে পারছো?'

'না, কে তুমি?'

'আমি সিদ্ধার্থ। আমি যে ফিরে আসবো, তা আশা করেনি বুঝি?'

'তুমি তো মৃত।'

'না, আমি জীবিত। বিবাহ করতে যাচ্ছি। আমার পরিচয় চুরি ক'রে যাকে মৃত করেছো, সে তো আমার। তুমি তার কে?'—(অসম্ভব সিদ্ধার্থ: জগদীশ গুপ্ত)

এমন সময়ে অজয়া এলো শুভ্র মল্লিকার মালা হাতে, সিদ্ধার্থর দিকেই এগিয়ে যাচ্ছিলো কিন্তু সেই আধ-পোড়া মৃতদেহ হাত তুলে তাকে নিষেধ ক'রে দিলো, 'তুমি ওকে ভালোবাসো না; তুমি ভালোবাসো আমার গল্পটিকে; জানো না লোকটা জারজ, অর্থলোভে কুকপা বৃদ্ধা বারাসন্মার সেবা করতো। তুমি তার গলায় এসেছো মালা দিতে!' ব'লে দেহ হাত বাড়িয়ে দিলো। অজয়ার চোপ ছুটো হাসিতে বলমল ক'রে উঠলো সে সেই হাতের হাড় জড়িয়ে ধরলে। অসহ্য যন্ত্রণায় ক্ষিপ্ত হ'য়ে উঠলো সিদ্ধার্থ, উত্তত হ'লো শবদেহকে আক্রমণ করতে, এমন সময় পিছন

থেকে কে মার-মার ক'রে উঠলো, 'মেয়ে হাড় গুঁড়িয়ে দেবো তোর।' সিদ্ধার্থ চমকে পিছনে ফিরে দেখলে, যার দোকানে সে বালক-ভৃত্য ছিলো, সেই দোকানি লাঠি তুলে তাড়া ক'রে আসছে। পালাবার ভগ্নে দৌড়োবার উপক্রম করতেই সিদ্ধার্থ ঝড়িতে প'ড়ে গড়িয়ে চললো। ঘোরা শেষ হ'লে লাটিম ঘেমন ক'রে গড়িয়ে ছোটে। উপমাটি জগদীশ গুপ্ত-র)।

এটা অবস্থা স্বপ্নই, কিংবা বলা যায় দুঃস্বপ্ন, বিতীষিকায় তরপুর ও ক্ষুধার্ত; কিন্তু তার পুনরাবৃত্তি হ'লো শেষ দৃশ্যে, যেখানে সব রহস্যের উন্মোচন ক'রে মন্ত এক রহস্য ও কুরাশার জালে আগাগোড়া উপন্যাসটিকে ঢেকে কেলো হ'লো; যে-স্বপ্ন বয়ন চলছিলো মাকড়শার জালের মতো, তা সম্পূর্ণ হ'লো অবশেষে, সম্পূর্ণ ও পূর্ণাঙ্গ, আর সেই স্বপ্ন ও সোনালি জাল বহু সংকেতের দ্ব্যতিময় বিচ্ছুরণ ছড়িয়ে দিলো। অন্য উপন্যাসে উপসংহারে এসে ঘটনাজালের গ্রন্থিমোচন করা হয়, নিয়তির ক্ষমাহীন হাত সর্বস্বা সম্রাটের মতো সব কিছু আলো ক'রে দেয়; কিন্তু এই উপন্যাসটি তার বিপরীত; গ্রন্থিগুলি সব যেন শেষ মুহূর্তে আরো আঁটো হ'লো, যখন সিদ্ধার্থের পিতামহ এসে সিদ্ধার্থের পুরো পরিচয় উন্মোচিত ক'রে দিলেন। আসলে তা কি উন্মোচন, না অন্য কিছু? তখনো সিদ্ধার্থ এসে পৌঁছোয়নি, কেবল তার পিতামহ দূর থেকে তাকে দেখতে পেয়েছেন। সিদ্ধার্থকে দেখেই তিনি অজ্ঞাকে জিগেস করলেন, 'সিদ্ধার্থকে তুমি খুব ভালোবাসো? বলা, লজ্জা কী! আমি যে তোমার দাদামশাই।' তারপরেই তিনি হতাশ ক্ষোভে ভ'রে গেলেন, 'কিন্তু সিদ্ধার্থের যে আব একদণ্ড পরমাধু; সে যে বাচবে না।' ব'লে তিনি সিদ্ধার্থকে আমন্ত্রণ জানাতে এগিয়ে গেলেন। তাঁকে দেখেই সিদ্ধার্থের চোপের জ্যোতি দপ ক'রে নিভে গেলো।

'মানুষ কদাচিৎ নিঃশেষে রিক্ত হয়,'—(পরিহ্রিতের মর্মহীনতাকে এই ব'লে প্রকাশ করেছেন জগদীশ গুপ্ত),—'মনের নিভৃততম কোণে এতটুকু ভাঙ্গা পরিবর্তনের আশা, তার বৃষ্টি থাকেই; কিন্তু যে নিঃশেষে রিক্ত হয় তার উল্লাসের বীভৎসতা এত কঠোর যে, অপরে তার আকস্মিক প্রকাশ সহ্য করিতে পারে না।'

জগদীশ গুপ্তর এটাই শেষ মন্তব্য, কেননা তারপর সেই বৃদ্ধ পিতামহের স্নেহচর্ম দৃঢ় হ'য়ে উঠেছে, শানিত হ'য়ে উঠেছে চোপ, এবং তিনি ঘোষণা করলেন,

'তোমরা সিদ্ধার্থ বলছো কাকে?—ওর নাম নটবর; বৈকুণ্ঠের গর্ভে এক ব্রাহ্মণের আরজপুত্র ও...। পরিচয় দেওয়া এখনো শেষ হয়নি। এক বৃদ্ধা বেণ্ডার শয্যাচার ছিলো, অর্থলোভে ও তার পরিচর্যা করতো।'—(অসাদু সিদ্ধার্থ: জগদীশ গুপ্ত)

মুহূর্তে, বইতে এতক্ষণ যাকে সিদ্ধার্থ বলা হচ্ছিলো, সে নটবর হ'য়ে গেলো। এবং সে পিতামহর কোনো কথা অস্বীকার করলে না। কোথেকে যে সে সিদ্ধার্থ

নাম আর পরিচয় পেলো, এই প্রশ্নেরও কোনো উত্তর দিলে না। সব প্রত্যাখ্যান সহ্য ক'রে ছোট্ট একটুকরো 'মাই' ব'লে সে প্রশ্নানোত্তর হ'লো। কোথায় যাবে, তাও পাঠককে বলা হ'লো না। শুধু সে চ'লে যাচ্ছে দেখে পিতামহ লাকিয়ে উঠে জিগেস করলেন,

'ব'লে যা শয়তান, আমার সিদ্ধার্থ কোথায়?'

'কোথায় তা জানিনে, স্বর্গ কি নরকে। তবে সে বেঁচে নেই।'

'বেঁচে নেই?'

নটবর যাইতে-যাইতে মুখ না-ফিরাইয়াই বলিয়া গেল, 'না।'

মূল কাহিনীর চুম্বক দিতে গিয়ে বহু স্থানেই জগদীশ গুপ্তর বাবহৃত শব্দ ইচ্ছাকৃতভাবে উৎকলিত হয়েছে। অত্যন্ত সংক্ষেপে হ'লেও এই হচ্ছে গল্পাংশ, গোটা বইতে ধীরে-ধীরে কেবল এক নির্ভর বাচনকলার সাহায্যে বহু পরিস্থিতির মধ্য দিয়ে একেই তিনি পরিস্ফুট করেছেন। কতগুলি গুপ্ত সংযোগ ও পৌনঃপুনিক উল্লেখের সাহায্যে গোটা উপন্যাসটিকে ধীরে-ধীরে অত্যন্ত সচেতনভাবে গ'ড়ে তোলা হয়েছে; বাবহার করা হয়েছে স্বপ্ন ও সাধনা, ভাবনা ও শিহরন, রূপ আর সংকেত। কোথাও অল্পপুঙ্খ ও খুঁটিনাটির বর্ণনায় লেখক পুঙ্খানুপুঙ্খ, কোথাও আবার সচেতনভাবে বাবহৃত হয়েছে নীরবতা। অনেক জিনিশ আছে, যা ভোজবাজির মতো ঘ'টে যায়; আবার বহু কিছু লক্ষ করা যায়, যেখানে কিছুতেই কিছু ঘটে না। সিদ্ধার্থর দুঃস্বপ্ন এসে আতঙ্কে যেমন নিখিল ব্রহ্মাণ্ড ত'রে দিয়ে যায়, তেমনি তারই ভিতর সংগোপনে গ'ড়ে ওঠে এক অপার মন্দাকিনীর প্রবাহ, যার নাম করুণা। সিদ্ধার্থর হতাশা বিবর্তিত সীমাহীন ক্লান্তিকে একদিক থেকে যেমন বিশ্বব্যাপী কুশ্রীতা অবিচ্ছিন্নভাবে পেঁচিয়ে আছে, কিন্তু সংগোপনে, বনির গর্ভে লুকায়িত হীরকের মতো, সমস্ত তিক্ত প্রত্যাখ্যান ও অসহায় আত্মসমর্পণ সত্ত্বেও, ভালোবাসা নামক রক্তবর্ণ ও স্পন্দিত রূপিণীকে আমরা আবিষ্কার ক'রে নিতে পারি।

বস্তুত স্বাভাবিকতা নামক একটি আশ্চর্য বিষয় আছে লেখকদের দপলে, যার পরাকাষ্ঠা আমাদের স্বাভাবিকতাকে অতিক্রম করতে শিখিয়ে দেয়। আমাদের মনে হয়, এই পুঙ্খানুপুঙ্খ স্বাভাবিকতা বোধহয় কোনো ছিল, কোনো উপায়, কোনো ছদ্মবেশ, যার ভিতর দিয়ে লেখক তার মূল বাণীকে, কৌটোর ভিতরে গন্ধের মতো লুকিয়ে রাখতে চান। একবার যদি কৌটো খুলে নিতে পারি তাহ'লে অসীমের দিকে পরিমল ব'য়ে যাবে।

'অসাধু সিদ্ধার্থ' এই ধরনের স্বাভাবিকতার অন্ততম উজ্জ্বল নিদর্শন। বাংলা সাহিত্যে পরবর্তীকালে এই স্বাভাবিকতাকেই বাবহার করেছিলেন মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়

তার 'দিবারাত্রির কাব্য', 'পুতুলনাচের ইতিকথা' ও 'লুপ্তপাথর'। বুদ্ধদেব বহুর 'রাধারানীর নিজের বাড়ি' নামক রুদ্ধশ্বাস গল্পটিও এই ধরনের স্বাভাবিকতার দিকে ইঙ্গিত করে। এই প্রসঙ্গে মনে পড়ে বিভূতিভূষণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের সেই প্রচণ্ড ও অত্যন্ত বাস্তব গল্পটি যেখানে কিছুতেই আর তুলনামূলক বাস্তব বানানো হ'লো না। জগদীশ গুপ্তরই অন্য একটি উপন্যাস 'রতি ও বিরতি'। এই ধারায় পড়ে। আসলে এই স্বাভাবিকতা হ'লো প্রত্যেক এক প্রচ্ছদ, যার 'নিম্নোমুখের' প্রভাব অনেককে এতটাই ভুলিয়ে দেয় যে, আমরা সহজে আর গেছি খুঁজে পাবি না, পাবি না গুপ্তন মোচন করতে। যে-জিনিষটা আমরা কবিতার কাছে 'চাপি' ক'র থাকি, সেই স্বন্দর আতিশয্য ও গুপ্তরন, সেই 'ছায়ার ঘোমটা,' যা আঁধার-আঁধারে ন'ড়ে যাব, স্বন্দরের আভাস দেবে, দেবে স্বগন্ধের দোলা আর ধ্বনি-প্রতিক্রিয়ার টুকরা-টুকরো আওয়াজ, কিন্তু কখনো বা নিঃশেষ হবে না, এবং কখনো যে-গুপ্তন সম্পূর্ণ অপসারিত হবে না।

'অসাধু সিদ্ধার্থ'র ভিতর সিদ্ধার্থ (যা নটবর) সঙ্ক্ষেপে আমরা যে-সমস্ত তথ্য পাচ্ছি তা এই রকম : সে একটি জারজ, বাল্যকালে এক মন্দির দোকানে কাজ করতো, কৈশোরে ও যৌবনের প্রথমে এক বৃষ্টি বেষ্টার শয্যাচর ছিলো; রাসবিহারী প্রমুখ কতিপয় জানিয়াত তাকে নিজেকে উদ্দেশ্য-সিদ্ধির জন্য ব্যবহার করে। শেষোক্তটি ছাড়া তার সম্পর্কিত বাকি সব তথ্যই আমরা শেষ দৃষ্টে ছেনেছি—বৃদ্ধ পিতামহর মুখে। সবচেয়ে যেটা স্মরণীয়, তা এই যে, সে এই জীবন চায় না। আর ঠিক যখন আত্মবিলোপের আকাঙ্ক্ষা তার প্রবল হ'লো, সেই মুহূর্তে অজন্মার সঙ্গে তার দেখা। অজন্মা তাকে বাঁচতে ব'লো, তার প্রেরণা সে, তার নিঃসঙ্গতার অবলোপ। কিন্তু অজন্মার কাছে সে ক'বে পরিচয় গোপন করলো কেন? আর কেনই বা তাহ'লে সে এক মিথ্যামৃতিকে পরিচয় করলো নিজের ভিতর? কেউ-কেউ বলবেন যে, সত্য পরিচয় দিলে তো তখন বিচ্ছেদ হ'তো। কিন্তু মিথ্যে পরিচয় দিয়েই কি সে টিকে থাকতে পারতো? তার যে অগ্ৰভূতি তাকে হাকনির মতো বিস্ময় ক'রে দিতে পারতো, তা'বে অসাধুজায় ও কপটচারিতায় ভ'রে দিলো কেন? সে কি জানতো না যে সিদ্ধার্থ হ'লো নটবরের ভুল-দুর্গ, অলীক-আদর্শ, আত্ম-প্রত্যয়কল্পনা? জানতো, কি সেই সঙ্গে এটাও তো ঠিক যে সিদ্ধার্থ নটবরের মিথ্যে-পরিচয় নয়, সিদ্ধার্থ-ই অর্থাৎ নটবর—অন্তত তা-ই সে হ'য়ে উঠতে চায়। এমন-এক আদর্শ সে বেছে নিয়েছিলো, যা আমলে সিদ্ধার্থ নামক একটি 'কাল্পনিক' অস্তিত্ব। কিন্তু অন্য অর্থে তা তো সবচেয়ে বাস্তব—কেননা সিদ্ধার্থই তো সে হ'তে চায়। তাছাড়া বেঁটাই বা সে পিতৃপরিচয়হীন ও জারজ? জন্ম তার অবৈধ কেন? অকর যে-জন্মে বাপপারে তার হাত নেই,

তাকে সে সংশোধন করতে পারবে না কেন? আমরা তো প্রতি মুহূর্তেই হ'য়ে
ঠাইছি, ভয় নিচ্ছি, পুনর্জন্ম আর জন্মান্তর তো এক জীবনেই সম্ভব। যে-জন্মের
গাথাপারে তার হাত নেই, তাকে কি ইচ্ছে করলেও মানুষ সংশোধন করতে পারবে
না? জন্মমূহুরে যা পেয়েছে, কেবল তাই কি ঠিক?

তারপর আরেকটি প্রশ্ন ওঠে। একটি অকর্গা, আকর্ষণহীন, গতযৌবনা বেস্তা—
সবুজত্বকা যে—তাকে সে যৌবনে নিজের তাপ দিয়েছে, স্পন্দন দিয়েছে, সান্নিধ্য
দিয়েছে। কিন্তু কেন তাকে এটা দিতে হ'লো? যে-বিপণি কেবলমাত্র ক্ষুধা মিটোবার
সামগ্রী বেচা-কেনা করে, সেই বিপণিতেই বা কেন সে কাজ করেছিলো ছেলেবেলায়।
পড়তে-পড়তে আমাদের মনে হয়, এই সব তথ্য যেন আসলে অল্প-কোনো কথা বলতে
চাচ্ছে আমাদের কাছে, গভীর কোনো বাণী যেন আছে তার সকলের উদ্দেশ্যে,
সে গভীরতায় ডুব দিয়ে আমরা বহু শুক্তি, উদ্ভিদ ও জলজ প্রাণী যেন তুলে আনতে
পারি। চাপা একটি গলা শোনা যায় তাঁর গ্রন্থে, গভীর এক কণ্ঠস্বর, কবির গলা,
ধ্যানী, মন-গভীর ও উদ্দীপ্ত—অস্তিত্বের মর্মহীনতার ভিতর যিনি মূল্য খুঁজতে চাচ্ছেন
সব কিছুই মত আর পথ, স্বপ্ন আর সাধনা, বাস্তব আর আদর্শ এদের ভিতর যাচ্ছে
কোনো অটুট, অভঙ্গ ও যোগাযোগ-সাধক সেতু গ'ড়ে ওঠে, তাই বোধ হয়
সেই কণ্ঠস্বরের বক্তব্য। অন্তত গোটা উপন্যাসটি উদ্দীপ্ত ও পরাক্রান্ত হ'য়ে
যোগাযোগটিই রচনা করার চেষ্টা করে। এই চেষ্টাই তাকে অধিজাতা দিয়েছে,
টান-টান করেছে, করেছে তীব্র এবং রুদ্ধশ্বাস। আর এই চেষ্টা যে আসলে দিবা-
স্বপ্নেরই পরিচর্যা, এই চেষ্টা যে বার্থ হ'তে বাধ্য, এবং তা যে আসলে বার্থ হবে ব'লেই
অপহীন—সেইজন্তই উপন্যাসটি শেষ পর্যন্ত এমন নিষ্ঠুর ও ক্ষমাহীন।

আর তা যাতে বিশ্বাসযোগ্য ও স্বাভাবিক হয়, তা যাতে বাস্তব হয়, প্রতিষ্ঠা পায়,
প্রমাণীভূত হ'য়ে ওঠে, সেইজন্তই এমন এক যুবকের কাহিনী আমাদের শোনানো হ'লো
যে সাধু হওয়া সত্ত্বেও শেষ পর্যন্ত অসাধু, যে যুগপৎ ঋষি ও ছত্রিয়, সাধক ও ছত্রচার,
শিল্পী ও পণ্যবিক্রেতা। যে-সাধনা সে করেছিলো, তার গায়ে রক্তের দাগ জলজ
করছে। আত্মার বিকাশ চেয়ে সে শেষ পর্যন্ত আপন আত্মাকেই বিনাশ করলে; কেননা
তার আধ্যাত্মিক পরিব্রজনের হিংস্র পথের নানা কোনার ঘাপটি মেরে লুকিয়ে থাকে
নিয়তিপ্রেমিত সেই সব গুপ্তঘাতকেরা যাদের নাম রাসবিহারী দেবরাজ কি কান্দীনাথ,
আর তারাই চক্রান্ত ক'রে পথিকের হাতে বিপজ্জনক একটি হাতিয়ার তুলে দিয়ে
উদ্দীপিত করে, যার নাম আত্মনিগ্রহ, যা চেতনাকে ছুঁছুকরো ক'রে তবে ক্ষান্ত হয়।

যে-সিদ্ধার্থকে তিনি আমাদের চোখের সামনে তুলে ধরলেন, তার কাছ থেকে সব
কিছুই পালিয়ে গিয়েছিলো, সঙ্গে ছিলো কেবল বিবেক আর স্বতি—হয়তো যার

শয়তানেরই অণু-এক ছদ্মবেশ। তার মনের সব 'পাপ' বেঁচে থাকবে—যতদিন সে আছে,—এই একটি ক্ষমাহীন বোধ কুমিরের কামড়ের মতো তার ভিতর ব'সে গিয়েছিলো ব'লেই তাকে এগিয়ে আসতে হয়েছিলো মৃত এক পাদের ধারে। যেহেতু এই ভুতুড়ে ডাক তার কানে পৌঁছেছে, সেই ভুলেই তার পরমায়ু শেষ হ'য়ে গেলো। কিছুই বাঁচাতে পারলো না তাকে, আদর্শ নিসর্গ প্রেম ত্যাগ এই সব একের পর এক তীব্র টানে ছিঁড়ে গেলো, কেননা আগেই উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে—তার স্বপ্নের ভিতর বহিমান চিতা থেকে উঠে আসে ভীষণ এক শব, তার শাদা ও কঠিন হাড়ওলা শরীর দিয়ে তার সঙ্গে প্রতিমূহুর্তে লড়াই করে। বিশ্বব্যাপী কুশ্রীতা ভাজে-ভাজে ঢুকে গেছে তার বিরক্তি ও সীমাহীন ক্রান্তির ভিতর, তাই সব প্রতিরোধ সত্ত্বেও শেষ পর্যন্ত তার দ্রুদৃষ্ট তাকে হানলো তিরু প্রত্যাখ্যান যার ফলে অসহায়ভাবে আত্মসমর্পণ করা ছাড়া আর-কিছুই তার করার থাকলো না। 'ঘোরা শেষ ক'রে অক্ষম এক লাটিমের' মতো গড়িয়ে-গড়িয়ে তাকে তাই খাদে গিয়ে পড়তে হ'লো। সে যদি বাঁচতে না-চাইতো তবে সে টিকে থাকতো পোকার মতো অসংখ্য হাতে মৃত এক মাকড়শার জাল আঁকড়ে, যেমনভাবে টিকে থাকে রাসবিহারী, দেবরাজ বা কান্দীনাথ। সে তা চাইলো না ব'লেই তাকে হুমড়ে ভুবে ছিঁড়ে যেতে হলো এইভাবে—আর শেষকালে তার অস্তিত্বের এমন-কোনো অংশ থাকলো না যা প'চে যায়নি। প'চে গেলো তার ভালোবাসা, পোকারা দাঁত-দাঁতে কেটে দিলো তাকে, ঘুণ ধ'রে গেলো মায়া দয়া মমতায়, এমনকি যে-আদর্শ সে আত্মরক্ষার জন্ত বানিয়ে নিয়েছিলো, তা পর্যন্ত ভুলভাবে প্রত্যাখ্যান করলে তাকে। বাঁচবার ও বাঁচাবার কোনো পথ মানুষের সামনে নেই, সে একটি হুনিরীক্য এবং অতি-হিংস্র শক্তির হাতে অশক্ত এক পুতুল মাত্র—এই যেন জগদীশ গুপ্তর বক্তব্য। ধীরে-ধীরে আমরা বুঝে নিতে পারি মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় কোনদিক থেকে দাঁড়িয়ে এই কথা বলেছিলেন :

'নদীর মতো নিজের খুশিতে গড়া পথে কি মানুষের জীবনের স্রোত বহিত পারে? মানুষের হাতে কাটা খালে তার পতি, এক অজানা শক্তির ইচ্ছিতে মাধ্যাকর্ষণের মতো বা চিরন্তন, অপরিবর্তনীয়।'
[পুতুল নাচের ইতিকথা : মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়]

পাঠ

আর অলৌকিক যাকে বলি, যাকে বলি জলপড়া, তুকতাক, ডাইনি-মন্ত্র সেই সব কুসংস্কার এই নিষ্ঠুর নিয়মের মধ্যে প্রাণ পেয়ে জেগে ওঠে 'প্রগাঢ় পিতামহী' কি টিকটিকির চেহারায়। মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের একটি গল্পে টিকটিকি মেরেছিলো ব'লে একজন লোকের চোখের তারা টিকটিকির মতো ধূসর হ'য়ে গেলো—হারিয়ে

ফেললো দৃষ্টিপাতের সব অধিকার—টিকটিকি দেখতে হ'লে তাকে চোখ থেকে শেষ-কালে চশমা খুলে ফেললেই চলে। ঠিক এই গোত্রেরই একটি রচনা আছে ভ্রগদীশ গুপ্তর, যে-গল্পটি তাকে কোনো কালে তৃপ্তি দেয়নি ব'লে তিন-তিন বার লিখেছিলেন।)

ঠিক যেন জীবনানন্দ দাশেরই একটি ভিথিরির গল্প, যে আরো-একটি পয়সা পাবে, এই প্রলোভন পেলে আহিরিটোলা, বাহুড়বাগান, পাথুরিয়াঘাটা, মাঠকোটা ছাড়িয়ে অন্ত্র যে-কোনোখানে চ'লে যেতে বাজি। শেষ পর্যন্ত সে গেলো ও, কিন্তু একটি পয়সা বা চকচকে সেই রূপোর টাকা শেষ পর্যন্ত ভ্রম-মৃত্যু সাধ-আকাজ্জা-আহ্লাদ দয়ামায়া প্রেম সব-কিছুর সমাহার হ'য়ে গেলো। আর এই সমাহারের কল হ'লো ভীষণ-কুটিল এক সরীসৃপ, যার হিংস্র ছোবলে মুহূর্তে বিষ ক'রে প'ড়ে আস্ত শরীরটাই নীল ক'রে দেয়। আস্তে-আস্তে আমাদের তৈরি করা হয়েছে অনিবার্য অন্তিম আঘাতের ভ্রম—যে-গর্ত থেকে বেরিয়ে এসে সাপ তার ছেলেকে কেটে গিয়েছিলো, ঠিক সেই গর্তের কাছে মাথা পেতে শুয়ে থাকলো রাম আর তার স্ত্রী। সাপ আর বেরোলো না, কিন্তু যে-ইচ্ছেটার প্রকাশ প্রথমেই ঘ'টে গেলো, আগাগোড়া এই মন্ত গল্পটির ভিতর থেকে লুকিয়ে-লুকিয়ে তা বারে-বারে চোরা নখর বের ক'রে এই দম্পতিকে বিদ্ধ ক'রে দিতে চাইলো। তার ফলেই রামের স্ত্রী কাঁপ খেলো নদীর জলে, যে-স্রোত তাকে ভাসিয়ে নিয়ে যাবে কোনো অমূলক ও অলীক পৃথিবীতে যেখানে পুনরুজ্জীবন ও পুনরুত্থান ঘটাবার ভ্রম ক্রুশের কাঁটা সহ্য করতে হয় না। আর শুধু রাম থেকে গেলো তার একমাত্র মূল্যবান সম্পত্তি—চকচকে একটি রূপোর টাকা—নিয়ে, যার গায়ে অজ্ঞাত এক রাজার মুখ আঁকা রয়েছে!

আবু করিমের চটিজুতোর মতো তারপর অঘটনগুলি যেন এক অলিখিত বিধানের দ্বারা যুক্ত হ'য়ে গেলো—আবিষ্কৃত হ'লো এক নিহিত নিয়ম, যার ফলে ঝুলিটি কেবল যে প'ড়েই গেলো, তাই নয়, পড়লো একটি গর্তের উপর—পড়তেই হবে তাকে—আর বেরিয়ে এলো ইহুরেরা যাদের দাঁত কুটকুট ক'রে ঝুলিটি শতচ্ছিন্ন ক'রে গেলো—আর সেইসব ছিন্নের কোনো একটি দিয়ে সেই চকচকে টাকাটি গড়িয়ে প'ড়ে গেলো গর্তে। আর এইসব অঘটনগুলোই বীজ ছিটিয়ে তৈরি ক'রে গেলো স্বপ্নের নিশীথলোক, অনেক দিন পর আবার যেখানে নিশির ডাক বারে-বারে গ'র্জে উঠলো : স্বপ্নটি যে অনিবার্য ছিলো, এতগুলি অঘটনই তার প্রমাণ; আর সেই স্বপ্নের ভিতরই উঠে গেলো পর্দা, যেখানে সব কিছু প্রকাশিত হ'লো আপনার স্বরূপে, চাঁদ, টাকা রাজার মুখ, ছেলের মুখ, মেঘলা আকাশ সব কিছু মিলে রামের ভিতরে তীব্রভাবে জাগিয়ে তুললো সেই ইচ্ছেটা, যার ফলে গর্ত খুঁড়ে-খুঁড়ে মৃত্যুকে আবিষ্কার না-করা পর্যন্ত তার স্বস্তি নেই। পর্দার পর পর্দা তুলে যেখানে রাম প্রবেশ করলো, সেখানে

নাড়া না-খেয়ে অস্তিত্বের উপায় কী। তার পরে তাকে যে বাধা, অহুগত ও বশব্দ ক্রীতদাসের মতো সেই গর্তকে ধীরে-ধীরে অতিকায় ও বিস্ফারিত ক'রে তুলতেই হবে, তা তো অত্যন্ত স্পষ্ট। শুধু মৃত একটি লঠনের ভূতুড়ে আলো পড়বে সেই গর্তের ভিতর, যেখানে থেকে নীরকেলের মালায় ক'রে মাটি তুলতে হয় তাকে। আর অবশেষে অনিবার্যভাবেই সেখানে যে বিশ্রামে ব্যাঘাত জন্মাবার জন্ত শরীরের হাত-পায়ে গর্তের বাইরে এনে ঘুমতাড়া মন্ত ভীষ্মটি কোনো-এক নিঃশব্দ বাণীর স্বরে আস্তে-আস্তে নিভেকে দোলাতে থাকবে, তাও মোটেই অস্বাভাবিক নয়, বরং নিষ্ঠুর হ'লেও কোনো এক নীরজ গণিতের মীমাংসার মতো মর্মান্তিক সত্য। আর তাকে দেখে রামের ঠাণ্ডা রক্ত যে দিরা-উপশিরাকে টান করে কেনিয়ে ব'য়ে যাবে, আর সে যে গুণটানা ধনুঃশরের মতো এক নিষ্পন্দ অধিভাতায় ভ'রে যাবে, তাও এক অলিপিত বিধানের দ্বারা পূর্বনির্দিষ্ট হ'য়ে আছে। যে-স্বপ্নের ভিতর সব পর্দাগুলি একে-একে উঠে যায়, সেই স্বপ্ন যে—ভেগে থেকে—নিজের চোখে দেখেছে তার কি কোনো নিষ্কৃতি আছে? তাই

‘রাম চট করিয়া পূজার পুরোহিতের মতো করিয়া আসনস্থ হইয়া বসিল—চক্ষু মূর্ত্তিত করিল—কৃষ্ণকারের অজায়ত চক্র যেমন ঘোরে এই উদ্ধত কণা বিষধরকেই অক্ষদণ্ড করিয়া রামের দ্বরিতপ্রাপ্ত স্নায়ুর উজ্জীবন আর আস্থার চৈতন্য তেমনি বেগে ঘূর্ণিত হইতে লাগিল। তাহার কৈশোর ধৌন পরামণি তিস্রাপাত্র সব ঘূর্ণিত ধূমপটলের মাঝে অত্যাঙ্কল ক্ষুদ্রিক্সের মতো বিকমিক করিয়া দেপা দিয়াই মিলাইতে লাগিল।’ (রতি ও বিরতি : জগদীশ গুপ্ত)

আর সাপটি কেরোসিনের ডিবেল ঝাপসা আলোয় তেমনি স্থির হ'য়ে থেকে গেলো নিষ্পলক চোখে, যেন নিশ্চিন্তভাবে সে তার পূজারীকে দেখছে। তার পরে রাম মাটির ডেলা ছুঁড়ে মারলো সাপের ঠিক মাথায়, রাগি আক্রোশে সাপ কণা হুলিয়ে গর্জন ক'রে উঠলো, রাম তার ডান-পা বাড়িয়ে দিলে সামনে :

‘দংশন অনুভূত হইল—মস্তিষ্কে, তারপর সর্বদেহে; মস্তিষ্ক যেন জ্বলন্ত শলাকার বিদ্ধ হইল—তারপর শরীরের রক্ত আঙন হইয়া অগ্নিশ্রোতের মতো বহিতে লাগিল—শরীর পুড়িতে লাগিল—দিরাগুলি ফাটিতে লাগিল, কিন্তু সে মুখ বিকৃত করিল না।’ (রতি ও বিরতি : জগদীশ গুপ্ত)

শুধু তা-ই নয়, তখন তার মনে প'ড়ে গেলো তার ছেলেকে দু-বার সাপে কেটেছিলো, তাই

‘ডান পা উপরে তুলিয়া রাম বাঁ পা পানা নামাইয়া দিল—পুনরায় দংশন অনুভূত হইল। রাম পা তুলিয়া আনিয়া আসনস্থ হইয়া বসিল—ফুৎকার দিয়া কুপি নিবাইয়া দিল—আলোর প্রয়োজন নাই।’ (রতি ও বিরতি : জগদীশ গুপ্ত)

এক পূরের স্নিগ্ধ বপন সেই আলো ভেঙ্গে উঠলো, যাকে মানুষ ফুঁ দিয়ে নিবিয়ে ফেলতে পারে না, তখন দেখা গেলো,

‘বামেন পা ও পানা আকাশের দিকে উঠিয়া আড়ষ্ট হইয়া আছে—পায়ের দশটি আঙুল গোড়ালির চটামিকে চুমড়াইয়া আছে—শরীরটা গহ্বরের ভিতর।’ (৫ রতি ও বিরতি : জগদীশ গুপ্ত)

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সবচেয়ে গোপা মায়া, উচ্ছিন্ন থাকলেও বামকে বাঁচানোর পারতেন না জগদীশ গুপ্ত; এক মায়াবাদী দার্শনিক মায়া তখন তাঁকে অধিকার করে বসেছিলো, হাজার চেষ্টা করেও তার চাপ এড়াবার ক্ষমতা তাঁর ছিলো না। এখন তিনি শুধু পারেন এই সব স্বেচ্ছা-মুগ্ধতা গহ্বরে, এটসব উচ্ছিন্ন আত্মাহুতিকে নিজের পুণ্ডিতের ধারণ করতে। জীবনানন্দ তাঁর বরোড়লেন, কলে তাঁর তীক্ষ্ণ ইন্দ্রিয় গুণি সঞ্চালিত করে দিয়েছিলেন গহ্বরের ভিতর, যে-প্রকৃতির ভিতর কমলালেবুর কোষে-কোষে মানুষের কম্পমান শব্দ ও ইন্দ্রিয় কোনো টান-টান ধকলশব্দের ছিঁচ মনে করিয়ে দেয়। প্রত্যাহার উপর চেপে বসে অক্লান্ত বিবেকের ভার, যার ফলে তাঁর কবিতার চরিত্রবা খুঁজে ফেরে সেট জীবন যা কড়িঙের, দোয়েলের, আরশোলার—যারা সব সময়েও কেবলি বেঁচে থাকে, বেঁচেই থাকে, বেঁচেই থাকে, বেঁচেই থাকে—আর ‘পৃথিবীর নিম্নাঙ্গের ডাইনামোর উপরে’ চ’রে বেড়ায়। আলস্য, বিশ্বাস, সৌন্দর্য—যা অল্প অনেক মুহূর্ত করে রাখে, কিছুতেই তা মোহমান করতে পারে না তাকে, আর তাই বাধা হ’য়ে ‘বেড়াল ও বেড়ালের মুখে ধরা ইচ্ছা হাসাবার’ ক্ষমতা থাকা সময়েও তাঁর সোমেন পালিত, অল্পপুষ্প ত্রিবেদী ও হৃদয় মৃত্যুকীর্তা শেষ পর্যন্ত অন্ধকারে লক্ষ করে সেই ‘তিনজন অস্বাভাবিক আবির্ভাব’, যারা একই সঙ্গে সমস্ত জীবন, মৃত্যু ও জগতের আনন্দযজ্ঞের নিয়ন্ত্রণ জানিয়ে চ’লে যায়। পেরুস বরেলের এই তিনজন ঘোড়সোয়ারের মধ্যে একজন শেষকালে জীবনানন্দের কাছে মস্তবলে উঠের গ্রীবার মতো নিস্তব্ধতায় পরিণত হ’লো, যার ফলে লাশ-কাটা ঘরের টানটাই বড়ো হ’লো। ‘যে-কোনোখানে, যে-কোনোখানে, পৃথিবীর বাইরে যে-কোনোখানে’—বোদলেয়ারের এই ভীষণ বাণী ধ্বনিত প্রতিধ্বনিত হ’লো চারদিকে, আর ‘খুলির মধ্যে সব সময় টিক-টিক আওয়াজ করা ঘন্টা’ গোপনে ‘চোখে, কানে, নাকে, শরীরের অঙ্গ-পা ফুটোওলা চামড়ায়’ চেতনার স্রোত বইয়ে দিয়ে গেলো।

যতক্ষণ ‘মদে কবিতায় নারীতে সংকর্ষে যে-কোনো কিছুতে’ মাতাল হ’য়ে থাকা চলে, ততক্ষণ তবু নিষ্কৃতি। ‘নির্জন স্বাক্ষরে’র মধ্যে সোমেন যতক্ষণ পথের দোকান, সিনেমা, সিনেমার ছবি, পেট্রল-মেশা ধুলোর গন্ধ আর হাজার রকম মুখের মানুষের

ভিড় কাটিয়ে এসে, মার্কেটের ঠাণ্ডা অন্ধকার, তজ্জা লাগা অলিগলি ঘুরে, খবর, মত, ওকালতি, স্বাস্থ্য, কামনুত্র, হুমমাতার, উন্নতি করার 'বৈজ্ঞানিক' ভুক্তাক পেরিয়ে খপ ক'রে অবশেষে রোগা, শস্তা, মহামূল্য বই তুলে নিতে পারে ততক্ষণ তবু কোনো রকমে টিকে থাকে। কিন্তু যখন সেই 'কালো-কালো পংক্তির ফাঁকে অগ্ন-এক শুভ্র পথ' আর তাকে টানতে পারলো না, যখন তার চেয়েও বড়ো হ'য়ে উঠলো, প্রত্যাহের ভার, হৃদয়ের নিষুর্ম অবতারণা, আর এই বোধ যে বেঁচে থাকতে হ'লে কেবল পশুর মতো মনের বালাই ঝেড়ে কেলো বাঁচতে হবে, তখনই আর বজায় রাখতে পারলো না তারসাম্য, হাতে তুলে নিলো বিষের গেলান, ডেকে আনলো তার তীব্র প্রতিবাদে এক ভীষণহৃদয় লুপ্তি। ঠিক এই কথাই বলেছিলো 'শেষ পাণ্ডুলিপি'র বীরেশ্বর গুপ্ত, যখন সে বেছে নিলো পাগলাগারদের পাশে সেই সবুজ জ্বাওলা-ভরা জল, ছেলেবেলায় যে-সবুজ জলের পাশে শুয়ে-শুয়ে সে সাপের দিবাস্বপ্ন দেখতো। সেই সাপ যখন ভোল পান্টে কাছে চ'লে এলো তখন আর আত্মরক্ষার কোনো উপায় রইলো না। নিয়ম যাকে বলে, ভালো মন্দ প্রভৃতি অভিধা দিয়ে যাদের চিহ্নিত ক'রে দিয়ে সোজা সরল পথে সব লোক 'জাবর কেটে-কেটে জীবন কাটিয়ে যায়', সেই নিয়মের বিরুদ্ধে বীরেশ্বর গুপ্তর হাতে মৃত্যু এক অস্ত্র ছিলো, খরশান ক্ষুধার দীপ্ত ও উজ্জল সেই তলোয়ার, যার নাম সে দিয়েছিলো 'বর্বরতা'। রীতিমতো অত্যাচার না-করলে এইসব মজবুত খুঁটিকে কিছুতেই উপড়ে তোলা যাবে না, এই কথাই সে ভেবেছিলো। তাই নিজেকে সে এক ভীষণ যুদ্ধের সেনাপতি ক'রে এগিয়ে এলো মারমুখে হ'য়ে, আর এক উজ্জল দীপ্ত আতশবাজির মতো নিজেকে জালিয়ে ফুরিয়ে গেলো। সমস্ত উপন্যাসটি তার দীপ্ত প্রতিবাদে জলজল ক'রে উঠেছে—সাধারণ যাকে বলি, রোজ যাদের চোখে দেখি রাস্তায়-ঘাটে, তাদের সঙ্গে তার তফাৎ এই প্রদীপ্ত বিস্ফোরণে, যা সব ফাটিয়ে দিয়ে, ফুলঝুরির মতো ঝিলিক দিয়ে গেলো। প্রতিবাদ করেছিলো সোমেনও, সেও ভেবেছিলো 'শরীরটা জোচ্ছোর'—আর নিজস্বাঙ্গা হৃদয়ে পাবার ক্ষমতা মন বারে-বারে নিয়মের দিকে ঝুঁকে পড়ে কোনো রকমে সব ভার তুলে থাকতে চায়। কিন্তু মানুষ, যেহেতু কলে-তৈরি ছাটা পোশাক, কিংবা কোনো ঘূর্ণামান রেকর্ড নয় সেইজন্যই বিরোধিতা জেগে ওঠে। একমাত্র মানুষই পারে এই প্রতিরোধকে সবলে জোরগলায় দাঁড় করাতে, সে ধ্বংসে ফেঁসে লুপ্ত হ'য়ে যায়, তবু জড় কিংবা নিশ্চেতন প্রাণীর সঙ্গে এইখানেই তার তফাৎ যে চেতনা নামক 'বিপজ্জনক' একটি সম্পত্তি তার কোষাগারে সঞ্চিত হ'য়ে আছে। সব লোক তা পারে না সহ্য করতে, তাই যে-কোনো একটি পচা গলা ধাতবস্ত্রতে নিজেকে মাছির মতো আটকে রাখে। যারাই চেতনার দ্বারা অস্ত্র লোকের চেয়ে আলাদা হ'য়ে থাকে—সাধারণত স্পর্শাতুরেরা অর্থাৎ

কবি বা শিল্পীরাই তা হ'য়ে থাকেন—সেইজন্ত বুদ্ধদেব বহুর রচনায় তারা সাধারণত সকলেই ছিলো লেপক, সাহিত্যিক হ'য়ে দেখা দেন। এই 'সনাতন সংঘর্ষ' সুরধার ক'রে শানিয়ে তোলে চেতনাকে; সোমেনের তাই হয়েছিলো, বীরেশ্বরেরও তাই, শ্রীপতিরও তাই—এরা কেউ শিথিল বা পোষমানা চরিত্রের লোক নয়, প্রত্যেকেরই প্রবলতা অবশ্যম্ভাব্য, এরা কেউ বার্থ প্রেমে জলে ডুবে আত্মহত্যা করেনি বা বুদ্ধি সন্তানের দুঃখ সহিতে না-পেরে নিজের অবমান টেনে দেয়নি, এমনকি এরা কোনো ব্যক্তিগত হতাশার জন্তও আত্মহতি দেয়নি। একটি মৌলিক প্রশ্নের সম্মুখীন হয়েছিলো ব'লেই তারা ছিঁড়ে গেলো। আত্মা ও শরীরের ঘন্ড়েই ঘটলো এত রক্তপাত, যা অসীম পর্যন্ত উঠে গেলো কিনকি দিয়ে।

কিন্তু কিছুই কি নেই, যা এই বিদ্রোহকে ধারণ ক'রেও—আত্মহতিকেই একমাত্র ও অনিবার্ণ পথ ব'লে নির্দেশ করে না?

সাত

এইখানেই প্রত্যেকে ভিন্ন-ভিন্ন মত ব্যক্ত করেছেন। জগদীশ গুপ্ত বলেছেন কিছুতেই বাঁচা যায় না, কেননা সেই অন্ধ শক্তি প্রবলতর ও ভয়ংকর—তাই শেষপর্যন্ত তাঁর উপত্যাসে টুকী কিংবা কিশোরীকে গিয়ে দাঁড়াতে হয় ব্রহ্মাণ্ডব্যাপী অন্ধকারে, যেখানে কোনোপান থেকেই আলো এসে পড়ে না যেখানে এক ভয়াবহ গহ্বরে রাম বা সিদ্ধার্থর বাঁকাচোরা তোবড়ানো শক্ত শরীর উন্টে মুখ খুঁড়ে প'ড়ে থাকে। আর মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় শেষ পর্যন্ত তাকে সহ না-ক'রে আর-এক আদর্শের সাহায্য নিয়েছিলেন, মার্কসবাদ যার নাম, আর যার ঢাকা-ভাঙের মধ্য থেকে মস্ত সব লেবের নিয়ে এসে সব কিছুকেই নিয়মের দ্বারা বেঁধে দেয়া যায়। যে-নিয়মের বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদ জানিয়েছিলেন তিনি, সেই রকমই আরেক বিশাল্যকরণী ষাটকা তিনি নিয়ে এসে অন্ধ কতগুলি খুঁটি তুলে দিলেন, ঝকঝকে তকতকে নিকোনো—কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত কোনো উদ্ধারের পথ কি তা দিতে পারলো? আরো অজস্র আত্মহত্যার পথ তো তেমনি উন্মুক্ত থেকে গেলো, যেমন ছিলো আগে। আর জীবনানন্দ দাশ চাইলেন তিমিরহননের অস্ত্র, ফিরে পেতে চাইলেন সেই বিশ্বাস যার সাহায্যে সমগ্র অন্ধ সকলের মতো গলা ছেড়ে তিনিও বলতে পারেন, 'মানুষের মৃত্যু হলে তবুও মানব থেকে যায়।'

কিন্তু সত্যিই কি থাকে? তাঁর নিজের সাক্ষ্যই তো অন্ধ রকম—মানুষের মৃত্যু হ'লে যে কেবল খুরখুরে এক প্যাচা থাকে, যে-‘প্রগাঢ় পিতামহী সব সময়েই’ দু-একটা ইদুর ধরার ফিকির খুঁজছে। জড় আর অজড়ের ডায়ালেকটিক' যে আরো কারো-কারো

কান ধরে জোরে টান মারতে পারে, এ-কথা কি তিনি ভুলে গিয়েছিলেন? সম্ভবত নয়, কেননা সব 'জ্ঞানপাপী পাপি' নীড়ে ফিরে যাবার পরেও ফণিমনসার কাঁটাগুলি ভেগে থাকে, যাদের উপর শিথিল শিশির ঝরে পড়লেও তারা খোঁচা দেবার ক্ষমতা হারায় না। শেষ পর্যন্ত অন্ধকারে কোনো-কোনো ভিথিরি হাত বাড়িয়ে দেয় গ্যাস-লাইটে ফুটে ওঠে একটি তীক্ষ্ণ মুখের পরিণাহ, আর বাতাস থাকে চিনে বাদামের মতো বিস্তৃত, এমন এক জগৎ থাকে যেখানে কুষ্ঠরোগীকে জল চেটে খেতে হয় হাইড্রান্ট খুলে, কিংবা সেই হাইড্রান্ট তার পিপাসার তীব্রতায় ফেঁসে যায়, আর জন্তুগুলো আহুপূর্বই থাকে যারা নিছকই লজ্জাবশত কাপড় পরে এবং 'নগরীর রাত্রিকে লিবিয়ার জঙ্গল' করে দেয়।

বুদ্ধদেব বহুর রচনাতেও মৌলিনাথেরা মেনে নেয় স্বেচ্ছানির্বাণন আর 'জয়জয়ন্তী'র ত্বরের ভিতর গর্জন করে ওঠে মধ্যরাতের রেলগাড়ি যা কোনো দূরের দেশে সরিয়ে নিয়ে যায়। সেই দূরের দেশ—বলাই বাহুল্য—স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত জীবনধারা থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন। সেখানে কেবল হাতের দাঁতের মিনারের চূড়ায় ঠাণ্ডা এক নির্জন কুঠুরি দিন-রাত ভেগে থাকে—আর অমোঘ ও অমর এক সৃষ্টির সাধনায় যা ভরে থাকে। ঋষি হ'তে বলা হয় যেন সকলকে, বলা হয় তপস্তায় মগ্ন হ'তে, যেখানে সাধনার ভিতর সব কাম রূপান্তরিত হ'য়ে যাবে প্রেম নামক অমর, স্পন্দমান ও আরক্তিম হৃৎপিণ্ডে। 'রক্ত ফুল, ঝংকার, চন্দন'—অর্থাৎ ভোগের সমস্ত উপাদানই যখন 'দেহচ্যুত একটি নিঃসরণ' হ'য়ে যাবে, সে-দিনই সব আপাতবিসদৃশ ও আপাতবিরোধী উল্লেখের ভিতর রচিত হবে যোগাযোগের সেতু,—স্বপ্ন আর সাধনা, মত আর পথ, বাস্তব আর আদর্শ এদের ভিতর সম্ভব হবে বিনিময় সংমিশ্রণ, সংমিলন—এরা গ'লে যাবে একটার মধ্যে আরেকটা; কিন্তু যতক্ষণ তা হবে না ততক্ষণ শুধু থাকবে পলায়মান পাখির ডানার হাওয়া, 'বাগ্র মৃতি শূন্য ছেনে ছিন্ন কাঁচুলিতে' ঠ'কে যাবে, দিকিধিকি জ্বলতে থাকবে 'নিঃসিত চুল্লি' ততক্ষণ হ'তে হবে 'উদাসীন, শাস্ত, ছন্নছাড়া,' হ'তে হবে 'ক্ষীণ, অলক্ষ্য আর পুলকে বধির।' এই ভীষণ প্রতীক্ষা যাদের হুমড়ে দেবে এবং হুমড়ে যাবে জেনেও যারা প্রতীক্ষা করে থাকবে তাদেরই নাম সোমেন, বীরেশ্বর কি জীপতি। কোন আশ্ব, "স্বপ্ন রাখতে পারে এই প্রতীক্ষার মুহূর্তকে? অর্কিমুসের বীণা যিনি শুনেছিলেন, সেই প্রলয়ের একটি শুভ বুদ্ধদেব বহু অহুবাদ করে দিয়েছেন, যা অভিষেকে ও অভ্যর্থনায় ঘুরে-ঘুরে বাজতে থাকবে; অন্তত যার ভিতর প্রলয়ের উত্তর দেবার একটা চেষ্টা আছে; অন্তত যেখানে কোনো 'স্বপ্ন-তার বীণা'র স্বর বা মাহুয়ের সমস্ত সাধনার পিছনে 'অন্ত-এক অলক্ষ্য নিঃসার' হাওয়া লাগে, যা দেবতাদের পক্ষেই সম্ভব :

'তা পারে দেবতা। কিন্তু মানুষ কেমনে
করে সেই সূক্ষ্ম-তার বীণার অনুসরণ ?
চেতনা দ্বিধাও তার। আপোলার মন্দির-তোরণ
ওঠে না দ্বিধায়-ভরা হৃদয়ের পথের সংগমে।

তুমি যে-গানের গুরু, সে তো নয় বাসনা, প্রয়াস,
নয় কোনো অস্থিম লক্কের পাওয়া, ফিরে-ফিরে সাধা ;
অস্তিত্ব—তাই তো গান। দেবতার তাতে নেই বাধা।
কিন্তু কবে আমাদের হবে ? করে এই নক্স, আকাশ,

আর পৃথিবীতে আমাদের ফিরিয়ে দেবেন তিনি ?
শোনো, ছেলে, সে তো নয় প্রেমে পড়া, বাতে আকস্মিক
আবেগে বীধন ছিঁড়ে মৌন মুখে ঠেলে ওঠে বাণী :

ভুলে যাও কোনোদিন গেয়েছিলে। সে গান কণিক।
সার্থক গানের উৎস অস্ত্র এক অলঙ্কার নিবাস।
নিবসিত শূন্য এক। ইধরে শিউরে-ওঠা। একটি বাতাস।

ওই বোধ ছাড়া, এই দেবত্বের—অর্থাৎ অসম্ভবের—সাধনা ছাড়া, আর-কিছুই
নেই, যা বাস্তবলুপ্তি থেকে মানুষকে বাঁচাতে পারে।

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